THE SISTERS OF NAPOLEON

W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE



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THE SISTERS OF NAPOLEON

BOOKS BY
W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

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COURT BEAUTIES OF OLD WHITEHALL.

MIRABEAU, THE DEMI-GOD.



Princess Pauline Borghese.
From the "Venus Victorieuse" of Canova

THE
SISTERS OF NAPOLEON

ELISA, PAULINE, AND CAROLINE BONAPARTE

AFTER THE TESTIMONY OF THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

BY

JOSEPH TURQUAN

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE domestic life of Napoleon was a perpetual Retreat from Moscow, which eventually led him as surely to his Waterloo as the fatal Russian campaign. He himself declared at Saint Helena that Murat, who was but the echo of his wife Caroline, was the principal cause of his being there. But let us give the fatal Caroline her due. Fortune merely selected her at random to destroy the darling of whom she had tired. In Caroline's position her brothers and sisters would, one and all, have acted precisely as she did. For the much-vaunted *esprit de famille* of the Bonapartes was a pitiful thing: it consisted of theatrically falling on one another's necks after they had succeeded in wrecking their own and their brother's careers.

That they were able to do him any injury at all, however, was due to the weakest as well as the most amiable trait in the character of Napoleon. In few men have the family affections been more strongly developed. A better son, a more devoted husband and father, and a more generous brother there never existed. But demi-gods have no business to indulge in family affections, and Napoleon, who attempted to be a law unto himself in this respect as he was

in every other, was doomed to know the bitterness of affection lavished on people utterly unworthy of appreciating it.

His mother, by far the finest character of the family, never really recognised his worth till his star began to pale.

His unhappy son, to whom he gave the splendid title of King of Rome and consecrated the glory of his own career, was too young to sympathise with his aims—he was but five when they were parted for ever.

Of his wives, both of whom were false to him, Josephine was far from worthy of the pity that has been so sentimentally bestowed on her at his expense. Remembering her infidelities, which he so nobly condoned over and over again, the wonder is not that she was finally divorced, but that she should have been divorced with honour, so to speak. As for Marie Louise, whom he raised to a grander throne than her Hapsburg ancestors had ever sat upon, she deserted him with a light heart in his hour of need.

By all his brothers and sisters he was treated with the grossest ingratitude. Joseph, Louis, and Lucien had the presumption to be jealous of him. The two former, lost to all sense of honour and loyalty, did their best to thwart him on the thrones which they were glad enough to accept from him, and having thereby proved their incapacity as rulers attributed the failure of their administration to him. Lucien at least was consistent; he preferred to chew the cud of his paltry jealousy in obscurity to the honour of being the royal

vassal of so wonderful a brother. Jerome, the most insignificant and docile of the lot, chose the Retreat from Moscow as the time to display his unworthiness, in the ridiculous hope of saving his Westphalian kingdom, the preservation of which even one more foolish than himself might have known depended entirely on the triumph of the cause of Napoleon.

In this conspiracy of ingratitude and treachery, the sisters of the Emperor played conspicuous *rôles.*

Caroline, with a baseness that makes her resemble some monstrous queen of antiquity, betrayed husband, brother, and country alike to slake the thirst of her unprincipled ambitions.

Pauline, that Jerome in petticoats, though she was entirely free from the unconscionable ambition that Napoleon's prodigious fortune had fired in the others, and really loved him—as much as she was capable of loving any one—nevertheless injured his prestige socially by her shameless life quite as effectually as if her influence had been political.

Elisa, it is true, prided herself on setting an example to her brothers and sisters in loyalty to Napoleon and in the manner of governing the States he entrusted to their care. But her loyalty, which she was ever urging the others to emulate, was only cunning in disguise, and donned its true colours in the twilight of the Imperial day. As for her vaunted capacity, the moment she was called upon to test it, it vanished like the bubble it was, and she had to descend ignominiously from her throne.

Of this strange family it is with the careers of the sisters of Napoleon alone that M. Turquan is con-

cerned in this book. His object, he states in his preface, has been to paint their portraits in a manner which shall resemble them as closely as possible, without flattery or disfigurement. To obtain this result, he has dipped his brush freely in the paint on the palettes, so to speak, of contemporary memoirs, letters, and other documents. This is as it should be, for posterity has virtually agreed to accept the verdict passed upon the Imperial princesses by their own generation. Such as M. Turquan shows they appeared to their contemporaries, such they may be regarded to-day—women essentially vain, arrogant, frivolous, and selfish, "crowned courtesans" as M. Turquan aptly calls them, who lost their heads on the dazzling summits on which they were placed by Napoleon, to whom they owed everything, including their niches in history which they do not deserve, and to whose ruin they very largely contributed, failing in their incredible folly to perceive till too late that it meant their own as well.

W. R. H. TROWBRIDGE.

LONDON.
August, 1908.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE sisters of Napoleon had a much greater influence than is generally believed on the march of events during the reign of their brother —a sinister, degenerating influence which did the Emperor immense harm among the serious and respectable who are shocked by things at which society only smiles—and which, more than his interminable wars, commenced to alienate the masses whom his wise government had at first rallied to him.

"Women," said Michelet, "in the end ruin every party." The Imperial *régime* owes its fall partly to the sisters of Napoleon.

One of them, Caroline, was the direct and original cause of the disasters of the Empire. It was she, too, who in 1814 gave the *coup de grâce* to the Emperor and to France.

It is not, then, for the mere vulgar pleasure of displaying to the public the weaknesses and scandals of the lives of these crowned courtesans who were Napoleon's sisters that I have written this book, in which the frivolities of the princesses frequently efface the gravity of the historian; but rather to determine the measure of responsibility of each of

them in the fall of the edifice constructed by the Man of the Ages.

"I should not like my sisters' portraits to be painted by a bad artist," said Napoleon one day to Madame d'Abrantès.

I am assuredly not the artist the Emperor would have dreamt of for his sisters—not, alas! in any sense.

I have endeavoured to make my portraits of the Imperial princesses resemble them as nearly as possible. I have neither flattered nor disfigured them; but have merely tried to be truthful.

It is for the public to say if I have succeeded.

JOSEPH TURQUAN.

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ELISA BACIOCCHI

PRINCESS OF PIOMBINO AND OF LUCCA, GRAND DUCHESS OF TUSCANY

(1777–1820)



ELISA BACIOCCHI, PRINCESS OF PIOMBINO AND OF LUCCA,
GRAND DUCHESS OF TUSCANY

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I

LIKE all the children of M. Charles de Bonaparte, with the exception of Joseph, who was born at Calvi, Maria Anna came into the world at Ajaccio. The date of her birth was the 3rd of January, 1777. She was given the name of Maria Anna in memory of an elder sister who had died a few days after her baptism, which took place at the same time as that of the little Napoleon. The name of Elisa, by which she is generally known, she herself assumed later, because that which had been given her by her parents was, in her opinion, very ugly, and unsuited to the lofty rank to which the wonderful destiny of her brother had raised her.

Her infancy was not particularly interesting. The little Maria Anna was beaten from time to time, like all her brothers and sisters, corporal punishment being considered in Corsica in those days of great importance in the education of both boys and girls. It was not, however, always administered with justice, to judge from the following little anecdote.

Madame Bonaparte had an uncle who was a canon, from whom she one day received a basket of figs and grapes. Such a gift, which had originally a sacred significance, was regarded in Corsica with peculiar

respect. Madame Bonaparte, who was exceedingly devout, held the figs of her uncle in almost as high esteem as his hat or his cassock, and it came as easy to her to make the sign of the cross in eating them as it would have done had they been consecrated bread. Maria Anna and one of her little friends, however, happening to find themselves alone with the tempting basket, did not regard its contents in this manner. They tasted a fig, ate one and then another, till, in short, like the cherries of Madame de Sévigné, all disappeared. When they had finished the figs they began upon the grapes, and when the basket was empty they took to their heels.

After they had gone, little Napoleon, chancing to pass through the room, noticed the empty basket, and stopped to contemplate it. He seemed to be asking himself what it could have contained, when his mother appeared. She, in her turn, observed the empty basket, and asked him severely what had become of the sacred fruit it had contained. The poor boy, unaware that his revered uncle had sent his mother any fruit, replied that he did not understand what she meant. She naturally supposed that he had eaten it, and in a tone half-fig, half-grape, so to speak, preached him an eloquent sermon on the enormity of lying, then, having seized him by the hair and thrashed him soundly, put him on bread and water for three days.

Maria Anna, finding it convenient that her brother should be punished for her sins and condemned to fast because she had eaten too much, held her tongue. Nor did Napoleon, who did not

doubt that he was expiating the gluttony of his sister and thought that she might at least have left him some of the fruit, say anything to inculpate her. At the end of his three days' fast, however, the little friend of Maria Anna, or Marianne, as she was called in French, returned to make inquiries as to what had transpired in regard to the disappearance of the avuncular canon's figs and grapes. Perhaps she even asked if he had sent another basket. Madame Letizia chanced to overhear the little girls, and Marianne found to her cost that her mother's castigation was none the less severe for having been deferred, or rather for having been misapplied in the first instance. It did not, however, prevent the little Napoleon from keeping the stripes he had received.

"Even the good God, good God that He is," said his mother to him by way of consolation, "could not take them away from you."

For though Madame Bonaparte punished Marianne, she did not admire her son perhaps so much as he deserved for the stoicism and generosity he had displayed in preferring to be beaten, innocent though he was, rather than betray the guilty party. The worthy woman did not doubt in unjustly whipping the boy that she was acting in accordance with the teaching of that amiable philosopher of her time, the Abbé Galiani, who declared that two things should especially be observed in educating children: to teach them to support injustice, and also to accustom them to being bored. It is true Galiani had his reasons for holding these views; for he was a Justice of the Peace in Paris, and as such should have

known the value of justice; moreover, as abbé he preached, which should have enabled him to observe on the faces of those who listened to his sermons the dreadful effect of boredom.

But be this as it may, Napoleon never forgot this little episode of his childhood, and he recalled it later when First Consul, at a party which the little fig-eater, become Madame Baciocchi, gave in 1801 at the Château de Neuilly.

Marianne had the luck to be admitted to the seminary of Saint-Cyr before the age at which, according to the regulations of that educational institution, young girls were received. This was due to the influence of M. de Marbœuf. It was on December 15, 1782, that M. Charles de Bonaparte received notice that this favour had been granted him. Recent money losses caused him to welcome such good news with satisfaction; for it meant a child the less to support, a consideration that in his position was not to be despised, above all since the child in question appeared to possess an appetite not easily satisfied. Marianne's education was thus provided for, and her sojourn at Saint-Cyr, moreover, procured for her certain very acceptable material advantages. For on leaving the seminary the pupils were given a trousseau and a marriage settlement of 3,000 livres. Furthermore, the expense of the journey home to their parents was paid at the rate of a livre a league, which as Corsica was not next door to Saint-Cyr was another decided advantage. Unfortunately, these *pensionnaires* of Saint-Cyr, who in almost every instance belonged to families without



CHARLES DE BONAPARTE

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fortune, were given an education little suited to the modest life that awaited most of them, which was a very great misfortune for their husbands, themselves, and the whole country.

M. Théophile Lavallée, in his curious and learned *Histoire de la Maison Royale de Saint-Cyr*, has given some interesting information on the life of the pupils at that celebrated institution.

"The young ladies," he says, "could enter the seminary as early as their seventh and not later than their twelfth year. They remained there till they were twenty without ever leaving it, except in very rare and special instances, and could only receive visits from their relations during the weeks of the four great annual *fêtes*. They rose at six, heard Mass at eight, and worked till noon, when they dined; after this they could amuse themselves till two, then they worked again till six, and retired at nine. They were divided, according to their ages, into four classes, and in each class, according to their proficiency, into five or six grades of eight or ten pupils, each having her own desk. Until their tenth year they were in the Red class, and in this they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, catechism, and sacred history. At the age of eleven they passed into the Green class, and studied there the same subjects with the addition of music, general history, geography, and mythology. At the age of fourteen they passed into the Yellow class, where they were taught principally French literature, music, and the principles of religion; they also received some lessons in drawing and dancing. At seventeen they passed into the

Blue class, where the instruction consisted chiefly of languages and music, and where their moral education was developed to perfection."[1]

As the mistresses were deficient in numbers, they were assisted in their tasks, according to the spirit and letter of the regulations, by the best pupils in the upper classes. "Ten of the Blues or the Yellows were chosen and decorated with a flame-coloured ribbon, who assisted the mistresses in the Red and the Green classes. Twenty others also were selected and decorated with a black ribbon. These were called the 'Filles de Madame de Maintenon,' and they assisted not only the mistresses in the classes but the Head Mistress and those who had charge of the establishment generally."[2]

Marianne Bonaparte, unhappily, did not profit much from the lessons she received. Her spelling was as undisciplined as her Corsican nature, which was too Corsican perhaps. A request that she made to the municipality of Versailles to leave Saint-Cyr on September 1, 1792, is the proof of the former. While as to her character, the history of her life, which scarcely requires to be cited as an illustration, is proof of the latter. No, Marianne never had the least idea of aspiring to the "flame-coloured ribbon"; if there were any such in her life she had even less right than at Saint-Cyr to pretend to them.

Napoleon, who was very fond of his sister, went to see her as often as the rules permitted him. He was in the habit of taking with him his former school-

[1] Th. Lavallée, *Histoire de la Maison Royale de Saint-Cyr.*

[2] Ibid.

fellow, at that time his intimate friend and afterward his confidential secretary, Fauvelet de Bourrienne. Marianne also had as visitors some friends of her father's belonging to the little Corsican colony in Paris, the Abbé Démétrius de Comnène and his sister, Madame Permon.

The establishment of Saint-Cyr being an aristocratic institution incurred the ill-will of the Revolution, and on August 16, 1792—a week after the fall of the monarchy—the National Assembly decreed its suppression. On the 1st of September, Napoleon, who had been a captain since the 6th of February previous, having obtained leave to return to Corsica, resolved to go and seek his sister at Saint-Cyr and take her with him to Ajaccio. This was very thoughtful of him, for the young Marianne had no relations in Paris, nor for that matter in France; the times were threatening, and the decree closing the school was on the point of being enforced.

Napoleon having obtained the authority of the municipality to remove his sister from this abode of peace, which some years later he was to convert into a school of war, returned with her to Paris. He had at the same time received 352 livres, which was allocated to his sister as an indemnity. On arriving in Paris they went to the Hotel des Patriotes Hollandais, where Napoleon had a room. The young girl, coming from the peaceful atmosphere of Saint-Cyr, entered the great city on a day of bloodshed and terror.[1] But, worthy sister of her brother, such

[1] The frightful massacres in the prisons of Paris took place on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th of September, 1792.

things were not made to impress her too deeply. Napoleon obtained a passport for Ajaccio, and on the 10th the two set out for Corsica. On the 17th they arrived at their native city. Napoleon, with his fine new captain's uniform, and Marianne, in the sombre costume of a *pensionnaire* of Saint-Cyr, were at once objects of general attention. She was nicknamed Mademoiselle de Saint-Louis, which was not displeasing to her awakening vanity.

In November of the same year there was some prospect of a marriage between the young schoolgirl of fifteen and Truguet, the Admiral in command of the Mediterranean cruising squadron, who made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Bonaparte during a visit of twenty-five days he paid Ajaccio. Madame Letizia in particular expected an offer from the Admiral for her daughter's hand, and would willingly have accepted it, in spite of the great difference in age and tastes between him and the young *pensionnaire*.[1] The Admiral was gloomy, taciturn, and reserved, and according to La Revellière-Lépeaux, sensitive and obstinate.[2] It is true he was a very handsome and well-preserved man, but his good looks, considering his temperament was the opposite of hers, were hardly a guarantee of their future happiness. At this period, however, small attention was wasted on such details, and it was by no means rare, especially in Corsica, to see young girls become the brides of old men. The marriage might have taken place had it not been for the

[1] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

[2] La Revellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires.*

exigencies of politics, which the Admiral must later have blessed. For, however accustomed he might be as a sailor to tempests, domestic storms would scarcely have been to his liking, and the cross-grained, exacting character of Marianne leaves little doubt that such must have arisen. But Truguet was obliged to leave Corsica, and shortly afterwards civil war broke out in the island. The Bonapartes, who were members of the patriotic or French party, were hunted down by the partisans of Paoli, and Madame Letizia, forced to flee, deemed herself lucky to find a trading vessel at Calvi, in which she and her children crossed to Toulon without molestation from the English cruisers.

Marianne's life at Toulon and Marseilles with her mother and sisters was one of privation for which the education she had received at Saint-Cyr had little prepared her. But Madame Letizia had passed through worse times in Corsica. For lack of a better gift, she gave her daughter an example of patience; and when in the end the Government granted Madame Bonaparte a small pension as a Corsican refugee in France which enabled her to provide, though modestly, for the daily needs of the family, anxiety as to to-morrow's means of subsistence ceased to torment the little household, who had pictured themselves driven to appeal as paupers at the office of the charity organisation of Marseilles as the last means of obtaining their daily bread.

It is not known how General Bonaparte, who had himself been ever very poor, managed to procure money after the 13th Vendémiaire, but he did so,

and plenty of it too. Like the good son and brother he was he immediately sent some to his family, not a small amount as in the past, but quite a fortune.

"I have," he wrote Joseph, "sent the family 50,000 to 60,000 livres in silver, paper money, and bills. Therefore, distress yourself no further. . . ." [1]

Madame Letizia and her daughters, being thus suddenly extricated from their humiliating struggle with poverty, made haste to quit the modest lodgings they had occupied and installed themselves comfortably on the first floor of an apartment in the Rue Paradis. They made acquaintances; and Corsicans returning home or arriving in Marseilles did not fail to look them up. For Corsicans always paid court to the family of a general, since they never knew when they might have need of his influence for themselves or their relations or friends in the army. So in a short time the young Mesdemoiselles Bonaparte had a fresh wardrobe and a *salon* that was much frequented.

"In this *salon*," wrote a man who in his youth was often seen in it, "the conversation was always on heroism in war. The young ladies related such instances with due emphasis and knew the names of all the distinguished heroes. Elisa especially expressed herself with an energy unexpected in one of her sex." [2]

Some natures are developed and refined by misfortune which otherwise would remain quite commonplace. This was not exactly the case with

[1] Général Philippe de Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires.*

[2] Général de Ricard, *Autour des Bonapartes.*

Marianne Bonaparte. In spite of her enthusiasm for noble deeds, her nature was cross-grained and disagreeable, nor does adversity appear to have refined it much, while in later years good fortune was scarcely more beneficial. She was not one of those who are influenced by circumstances. Because she was wilful and imperious, it has been said of her indulgently that this sister of Napoleon was the same stamp of woman as her brother was man.[1]

It was, perhaps, owing to her unpleasant disposition that, notwithstanding the brilliant victories of the army in Italy which placed her brother in the foremost rank among the most exalted personages, and in spite of the splendid position of her family which followed as a natural consequence, her mother, who must have suffered much from this same disposition, hastened to bestow Marianne's hand in marriage on M. Baciocchi, a retired Corsican officer, who made her an offer at about this time. The name of Baciocchi, which in French signifies *baise-yeux*, has an odd and harsh sound in that language. In Italian, however, it is pretty and melodious.

The marriage took place on May 1, 1797, at Marseilles.

Lucien was opposed to this marriage, and continually regretted the good match she might have made with Admiral Truguet at Ajaccio just after she left Saint-Cyr. That the Admiral had been allowed to escape her he regarded as a piece of bad management.

[1] Comte de Survilliers, *Mémoires.*

"Frankly," he says in his Memoirs, "I should have liked him quite as well as this *bon et rebon* Baciocchi, who in spite of the excess of his *bonacite* loves nothing save his violin, which to be sure he can scrape passably, but so constantly is he at it that he ends by getting on the nerves both of his innocent instrument and his hearers." [1]

Perhaps Lucien thus sought to excuse the aversion his sister manifested at all times for her domesticated husband, for though often at variance there existed among the Bonapartes, contradictory as it seems, an excellent *esprit de corps*, which in spite of their almost constant personal grievances, and even their treachery to one another, caused the brothers and sisters to unite when any and every outsider interfered with their individual and mutual interests. There never was a better brother than Napoleon; unfortunately his sisters were unworthy of his devotion.

To understand the characters of Napoleon's sisters one should read the Memoirs of Madame d'Abrantès, their friend in childhood. "Madame Baciocchi," she says, "was never nice to her mother, but," she adds, "who was she ever nice to? I have never known any one with a sharper tongue." [2]

Madame Bonaparte, then, gave her daughter's hand to the first who sought it.

Not only was this the usual custom in Corsica, but one can begin to understand the reasons for her rather hasty consent. There was, perhaps, also another

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

reason. At this time Madame Bonaparte dared not count too much on the assistance of her son Napoleon. Since his marriage with Josephine de Beauharnais, which had taken place against the wishes of his mother and in spite of the opposition of Lucien and Joseph, a certain coldness had existed between the conqueror of Italy and his family. Consequently his advice had not been sought in regard to the marriage of Marianne and M. Baciocchi.

Paschal Baciocchi was quite a decent fellow in his way, but he was very narrow-minded except on certain points, on which his views were rather too broad. He was a most accommodating husband, and his wife and her entire family rendered him full justice in this respect. He appears, however, to have been hopelessly insignificant. Lucien, as has been stated above, spoke of him as "that *bon et rebon* Baciocchi," and Metternich says in his Memoirs that "Napoleon would have preferred for a brother-in-law a man less destitute of intellectual ability."[1] But Baciocchi's lack of intellect in nowise mattered with Mademoiselle Bonaparte, who considered that she had sufficient for both.

When an armistice crowned the victories of the immortal campaign in Italy, General Bonaparte chose the Château de Monbello for his headquarters and his summer residence at the same time. He had invited his family to visit him here, the *château* being large enough to accommodate them all. The entire family accepted this invitation. Such a gathering afforded Napoleon the opportunity of introducing his

[1] Prince de Metternich, *Mémoires.*

Creole bride to his relations, and if the Bonapartes felt obliged to accept the young wife, whom they looked upon as an intruder, as one of themselves, the situation equally obliged the General to recognise Baciocchi, who had entered the family without his having been consulted on the subject. Lucien, moreover, was similarly placed, for he had married Christine Boyer, a niece of the inn-keeper at Saint-Maximin, who was as good as she was uneducated.[1] There was, therefore, on one side or another some one to be forgiven for having permitted his or her personal interest to ignore family considerations. But prosperity and success make one indulgent and conciliatory, and no occasion could have been more favourable than this family gathering in which to wipe out old scores and make the acquaintance of the new relations.

Madame Baciocchi was eager to enjoy to the full her brother's greatness, and she, as well as her husband, received a cordial welcome from Josephine. In his Memoirs Napoleon says, "Josephine behaved as she should have done to her husband's mother, showering attentions upon her and forestalling her wants, while at the same time she was equally thoughtful of my sisters; nor did she neglect Baciocchi. The principal object, in fact, of this family reunion was to effect a reconciliation between Elisa and myself, she having just married without consulting me."[2]

This explanation given by Napoleon of his sister's

[1] She did not even know how to sign her name.

[2] *Mémoires de Napoléon Bonaparte.*



JOSEPH BONAPARTE AND HIS WIFE (*née* JULIE CLARY)

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negligence is delightfully ingenuous. But if his consent had been unasked before the marriage, it was sought afterwards.

"Madame Mère," equally naïvely writes Baron Hippolyte Larrey, "seized the opportunity to obtain the tardy, or withheld, consent of Napoleon to the marriage of Elisa and Felix Baciocchi, their compatriot. The conqueror of Montenotte, of Castiglione, and of Arcola, besought by his mother, hastened to join his consent with hers to the marriage of his sister, who herself had quite forgotten to demand it. The wedding took place at Marseilles, as did also that of Madame Letizia's eldest son to a Mademoiselle Clary." [1]

Only the civil ceremony, however, had taken place at Marseilles, for Madame Letizia, though she attended mass, was apparently not aware of the importance the Church attached to the religious ceremony, and it was at the Château de Monbello that the blessing of the Church was bestowed by an Italian priest on the lately wedded pair. It was, however, General Bonaparte who insisted on this, neither Madame Baciocchi nor her mother seeming to have been much interested in the matter.

At Monbello time passed quickly in a round of pleasures. There were frequent excursions to Milan, where, by the way, Madame Letizia would have liked to live, as well as visits to other places, while every night there was a grand dinner or reception. Young Madame Baciocchi threw herself into this vortex of pleasure, and revelled in all the gaiety which the

[1] Baron Larrey, *Madame Mère.*

splendid position of her brother had secured for all the Bonapartes from this time forward.

The family gathering at Monbello broke up when Napoleon prepared to start for Passeriano in Friuli to meet the Austrian plenipotentiaries. Madame Letizia then returned to Marseilles with Madame Baciocchi, whence they proceeded to Ajaccio, as the former wished to rebuild her house, which had been burnt down during the civil war. In the meantime Baciocchi accompanied his brother-in-law, Lucien, who had been charged with an official mission to Spain.

"Madame Baciocchi," writes Lucien, "was determined to be rid of her husband." [1]

And this after but a few months of marriage! Truly, a fine promise for the future.

[1] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Memoires.*

II

THE condition of the Bonaparte family had changed marvellously in a very short time. Apart from the glorious position that Napoleon had won by his incomparable genius, Lucien was no longer the insignificant clerk in the War Department that he had been at Saint-Maximin. While watching his brother's success he too had been fired with ambition. He had just been elected to the Conseil des Cinq-Cents, and had taken a house in Paris—No. 1,225, Grand Rue Verte. This street is now Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and No. 1,225 was at the corner of the Rue Miroménil. On settling here he wrote at once to his mother and sister, Madame Baciocchi, offering them his hospitality.

Madame Baciocchi was delighted at the thought of leaving Ajaccio, where the familiar, and true, proverb was at the moment being verified, "that no man is a prophet in his own country." For at Ajaccio it was impossible to conceive that little Napoleon Bonaparte, whom nobody had believed to be more intelligent than other young men in the town of the same age, had in a short time so gloriously distinguished himself. A great deal of jealousy is always mixed with belittlement, and the mean and base, who are

too often in the majority, look with envy upon the success of one with whom they have played in childhood. So at Ajaccio it pleased people to say, in order that they might not appear too impressed by so much glory, that the news which reached Corsica had been singularly exaggerated. Madame Baciocchi had consequently not received all the attention which she considered her brother's fame should have accorded her. Offended, she longed to return to Paris, of which she had only had a glimpse as she passed through it, and which drew her to it like a magnet. Paris no longer appeared to her too vast a stage on which to play a brilliant part, but, carried away by her thirst for power, she regarded it as the proper field for the display of her abilities, which she complacently over-rated. Her brother had conquered Italy, why should she not conquer the first place in Parisian society?

When she arrived in Paris with her mother she went to Lucien's in the Rue Verte. Napoleon was at the time in Egypt, and some anxiety was felt on his account, many people even going so far as to deem him totally lost. Josephine in the meantime was consoling herself for her temporary widowhood with a former lover, Hippolyte Charles, at Malmaison. But Lucien was far from wasting his time. Being of an insinuating nature, possessing sufficient skill to pass off a minimum of knowledge as a mine of learning, and a certain superficial facility in everything as talent, and believing himself irresistible with women, he had gained by sheer assurance a position among his colleagues in the Conseil des Cinq-Cents,

whereby he turned his brother's triumphs to his own account. His house was much frequented, and it was in his *salon* that his sister served the apprenticeship which converted her into a woman of the world.

An apprenticeship was, indeed, just what she needed, but unfortunately she always remained an apprentice. Her character was not sufficiently supple to make her a woman of the world in the fullest sense. Outwardly she certainly acquired the manners and ways of good society; she knew how to enter a *salon* and to receive her guests much as other people, but one was always aware of an effort beneath her amiability, and she could never acquire the *finesse*, the *nuances* which characterise those to the manner born. Though she had spent nine years at Saint-Cyr, the education she had received there had failed to remove completely the rough outer shell, so to speak, that enveloped less her manners than her whole character, which was hard, self-willed, unbending. She was not lacking in intelligence, but it was of a kind which a woman who herself possessed wit in abundance has described as the *pudeur de l'esprit*.[1] Regarding everything from her own point of view, she had little consideration for others, and possessing little sympathy, she was incapable of elevation of soul. This, however, did not prevent her being serviceable when such a *rôle* suited her.

"Never did a woman," said the Duchesse d'Abrantès of her, "seem so utterly devoid of the charms of her sex; one would have said she wore a mask."[2]

[1] Madame Emile de Girardin.

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des Salons de Paris*.

She seemed, in fact, to have been born a drill sergeant, and with her brusque manner and her loud, sharp voice, she might have been taken for an unattractive boy dressed as a woman. While, to complete the portrait, Madame Baciocchi had a southern accent of which she seemed totally unconscious, an accent of which it is impossible to give an idea, and which would have rendered the most charming face displeasing. Notwithstanding, Lucien has said, "Elisa's French is pure and without accent." [1]

At Ajaccio all these peculiarities might have passed unnoticed, but not in Paris. Madame Baciocchi was, therefore, far from being a superior woman. Personally she was neither pretty nor ugly, but ugly rather than pretty. Her complexion was very white, as is often the case with Corsicans, and she had a passable figure; as for the rest, "such things as arms and legs were attached to her body as they chanced." [2] In a word, with such an exterior, Madame Baciocchi was as insupportable as if she had been born a beauty.

She had, too, more than one eccentricity, one of which was to pose as an educated woman and even a *savante*, she who could not spell properly! Her brother Lucien, who had a similar whim but greater ability and an ambition greater still, failed to perceive in her the fault they shared in common. In 1801, he wrote thus to General Leclerc:—

"Elisa is altogether taken up with *savants*. Her house is a tribunal where authors come to be judged." [3]

[1] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*
[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*
[3] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

The unfortunate frequenters of Lucien Bonaparte's *salon* were condemned to listen to long-winded tirades —and such tirades!—on this or that question of politics or philosophy, instead of the agreeable conversation of the usual Parisian *salon*, where wit, like a butterfly glancing from flower to flower, paused at one subject no longer than was necessary, and then passed on to the next in rapid, graceful flight. There was, however, no need to reply; in the first place this would have prolonged the boredom of the discussion, and in the second young Madame Baciocchi, in spite of her nineteen years—or perhaps on account of them —cut short every argument and always had the last word. She knew more about chemistry than Fourcroy or Chaptal, and more about physics than Berthollet, and it would have taken little for her to have found a flaw in the *Mécanique céleste* of Laplace. In painting she was equally well informed, and David, Gérard, Prud'hon, Girodet, Isabey all made the grave mistake of not listening to her advice. As for Talleyrand, how much he might have learned had be but deigned to receive instruction from one who could have given points to Machiavelli as well as to Pico della Mirandola *et quibusdam aliis!* If she had some wit, she had a still better memory; but it sometimes chanced that both failed her, and when she had embarked on a long discourse the effort she made to speak well caused her to forget the point, which proved her knowledge consisted more in memory than in intelligence.

Still, since she was the sister of the glorious General Bonaparte, people gladly came to her *salon*, or rather

to Lucien's, who had left the Rue Verte for the fine Hôtel de Brienne in the Rue Saint-Dominique, where one was obliged to submit to the literary pretensions of both the brother and the sister. It was at Lucien's that Madame Baciocchi made the acquaintance of M. de Fontanes. The poet, it seems, was pushing, and the pedantry of the young woman led her to accept kindly the spiritual madrigals he dedicated to her. Perhaps also Elisa made advances to him, but in any case their bond of sympathy occasioned much gossip. "Lucien alone was for some time ignorant of it, and he was never one to pry."[1] Lucien's blindness, however, counted little either way: he was not her husband. While as for Baciocchi, as has been said already, he was *si bon!*

Suddenly the news reached Paris that Napoleon had arrived in France. Contrary to all expectations, he had managed to leave Egypt, and his carriage was tearing along the road to Paris at express speed. His mother and brothers—save Louis, who with Josephine had gone to Burgundy to meet him and missed him—his sisters, all the family awaited him in the Rue de la Victoire. After the first greeting the General asked, "And Josephine?"

Bitter and constrained smiles prepared him for something unpleasant.

"So that which I heard in Egypt was true, then?" he said.

At once he was informed of his wife's indiscretion during his absence. No detail was spared him of the intrigue in which Josephine had indulged at Mal-

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des Salons de Paris.*

maison whilst he, Bonaparte, was in Egypt exposed to bullets and pestilence; and they added that her manner of consoling herself while he was winning laurels at the Pyramids and Aboukir had furnished Paris with plenty of material for scandal. Madame Baciocchi was no less eager than the others to disparage the absent woman.

But Josephine, who, knowing only too well she had every reason to expect accusations would be made against her, had gone to meet her husband in order to justify herself in advance, returned. The scenes that followed the meeting between the couple are well known, as is also Bonaparte's unexpected pardon of his wife. Madame Baciocchi, who did not like Josephine, could not conceive how her brother had forgiven her. "She took no pains," says Madame d'Abrantès, "to hide her feelings and let her disdainful enmity be apparent to all." Naturally after this Josephine could not endure her. There was henceforth secret war between the two sisters-in-law, in which neither let slip the chance of being disagreeable to the other. Madame Baciocchi was pitiless, and Josephine, who was not always good-natured, generally gave tit for tat. An opportunity of revenging herself on Elisa was not long in coming, and Josephine was not slow to follow it up. It was now, by the way, when her brother became First Consul, that Marianne renounced her name as decidedly too ugly, and adopted that of Elisa, which she preferred.

The following incident will explain Josephine's revenge.

After the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire, in which he had taken an important part, Lucien, in recognition of his services, had been appointed by Napoleon Minister of the Interior. But a very profitable speculation, which can scarcely be described as honest, that he had made in wheat decided the First Consul to deprive him of his portfolio. Napoleon did not take this step without much regret, and the dismay felt by the Bonapartes in general over this event was profound. Elisa especially felt her brother's disgrace keenly. Apart from her real attachment to Lucien, whom she closely resembled in temperament and whose literary and artistic tendencies she shared, she realised the advantage his disgrace would give the Beauharnais over the Bonapartes.

On the evening of the day on which Lucien lost his appointment she was at the Tuileries, an interesting study to the observer of human nature and the philosopher alike. Stanislas Girardin, who was both, happening to be present on this occasion, thus describes the impressions he received:—

"I went in the evening," he says, "to Madame Bonaparte's, whom I found sitting in a large armchair. I made her a very deep bow, which she acknowledged coldly. I regarded her carefully. She affected a reflective air the better to conceal from all her satisfaction. Her daughter (Hortense), less clever in the art of dissimulation, on the other hand, made no pretence to hide her joy. She sat opposite her mother, and her gaiety formed a striking contrast to the deep sadness of Madame Baciocchi's expression. Hortense had such a fine nature that her



QUEEN HORTENSE
[*After Isabey*]

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lack of feeling grieved me. The company, in which there were very few women, was composed of Mesdames Lecourbe, Chauvelin, and Clary; there were several generals, among others Lannes, Murat, Lecourbe, with their aides-de-camp. The Conseil d'État was represented by Réal, Champagny, and Miot; while there might also have been observed Dubois, the Prefect of Police, Alexandre de la Rochefoucauld, Chauvelin, Jaucourt, and Chaptal, who was radiant with triumph.[1]

"In a corner of the *salon* a game of *reversi* was in progress. Everybody appeared more or less embarrassed. The men spoke little or not at all. The remarks of the women were never followed up, and conversation languished. I approached Madame Baciocchi and said a few polite nothings to her. She told me with effusion, in a tone I shall never forget, since it proved her to be a tender friend, that she had wept all the day before, all night, all to-day, and that she was even now on the point of bursting into tears.

"'I came back from Plessis,' she said, 'day before yesterday with Lucien. On his arrival he left me to go to the Tuileries. He was there barely an hour; and on his return he told me of his approaching departure, and that of my husband. Picture my grief on learning that all those I love are leaving me at the same moment! I do not know how to conceal my feelings; I am on the point of crying again.'

"'Try to calm yourself, Madame,' I remonstrated; 'your tears would cause certain persons too much satisfaction.'

[1] It was Chaptal who replaced Lucien as Minister of the Interior.

"Madame Baciocchi made a fresh effort to compose herself, but finding it impossible, she tried to leave the room unobserved. Madame Bonaparte, however, who did not take her eyes off her, left her armchair and brought her back, affecting a sympathetic air, pressing her hand, *kissing* her, and doubtless overjoyed to discover on her cheeks the traces of tears." [1]

Girardin, however, was deceived as to the sincerity of Elisa's sensibility. It is true she wept. She had reason to regret that her favourite brother Lucien was shelved, as we should say to-day; but this was scarcely a matter for tears to one who piqued herself on having a character moulded on the antique. "Picture my grief," she had said to Girardin. Grief she certainly felt, but as one knows how selfish she was, one may be permitted to think that she felt Lucien's disgrace touched her personally. Had she not a throne in her brother's *salon*, and would it not now collapse? But there was another thing even more humiliating. The fall of Lucien meant the rise of the Beauharnais and their partisans. Was not this proved by Hortense's unfeigned joy, by Josephine's hypocritical kiss? It was this that was really the cause of Madame Baciocchi's grief; her tears were less those of regret than of humiliation and rage!

Lucien, moreover, was scarcely to be pitied. Like the good brother he always was, Napoleon had consoled him with the post of Ambassador to Madrid, a post that Lucien, whose chief virtue was certainly not honesty, knew how to turn to as good an account as his portfolio of Minister of the Interior.

[1] Stanislas Girardin, *Journal et Souvenirs*.

Madame Baciocchi, who had presumed to meddle in politics, had urged the First Consul to nominate M. Miot as Lucien's successor.[1] But General Bonaparte, who had reserved a confidential mission to Corsica for him, paid no attention to his sister's recommendation. It was at this juncture, possibly as a result of this rebuff, that her health declined. Her malady was difficult to diagnose, as is always the case when the mind rather than the body is affected. The doctors prescribed a course of the waters at Barège, and she accordingly went to the Pyrenees; but she was not much pleased with her cure, and on her return stopped at Carcassonne to consult Dr. Barthez, who had a great reputation not only in the South of France but among members of the medical profession generally. M. de Barante, father of the writer, was then Prefect of the Aude, and he kindly offered the hospitality of the prefecture to the sister of the First Consul, which she accepted.

"She was," says the historian of the Dukes of Burgundy, "suffering terribly from an affection of the stomach. My father being ill at the time himself, could not do the honours of the Prefecture, so I presented her his excuses and offered my services. Madame Baciocchi received me graciously. The sisters of the First Consul were still very simple persons. They travelled without a suite, and I found her in a wretched inn lying on a mattress placed on the floor so that she might escape the bugs. She rose and dressed while I waited in an adjoining room; then after a conversation which soon ceased to be

[1] Miot de Mélito, *Mémoires*.

formal, she took my arm for a stroll through the town. She seemed quite pleased to have met me, for she had been greatly bored travelling, and at some watering resort, of which I have forgotten the name, from which she had just come, she had not met a soul she knew. I gave her the latest news, for during the last three or four days she had received neither letters nor papers. Since she lived in the literary society of her brother Lucien and was intimate with M. de Fontanes, her interest and conversation were naturally in that direction. We talked of the latest plays and books, and I gave her the latest edition of the *Jardins* of Delille, which I had just received. It was in all a two days' *tête-à-tête.* At parting she begged me to call upon her when I next came to Paris." [1]

M. de Barante, still quite a youth, went to Paris, and recalling Madame Baciocchi's request when at Carcassonne, hastened to pay her a visit. In the meantime the power of the First Consul had rapidly increased, and the Bonapartes had all naturally gained in importance.

" I found Madame Baciocchi," says M. de Barante, " more of a *grande dame* than when we had sauntered together through the streets of Carcassonne. However, she received me graciously enough. But I was not twenty, and only seeking in society and the *salons* friendship or wit, I could not be bored with official receptions. So I went but two or three times to Madame Baciocchi's, and I have never seen her since." [2]

[1] Baron de Barante, *Souvenirs.* [2] Ibid.



FONTANES

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III

AS has been stated, chief among the eccentricities of Elisa was her pretension to literary ability; but her pretension was characterised by a degree of absurdity of which it is impossible to form an idea to-day. Still more inconceivable, however, is the fact that this absurdity was particularly pleasing to one who as a man of letters and a poet was noted for his good taste. This was M. de Fontanes, "whom everybody knew without understanding."[1] Madame Baciocchi, aware that the respect felt for him caused her to be treated seriously by men of intelligence, was at her best with Fontanes. The Duchesse d'Abrantès, who was one of those who failed to understand the devotion of this man of sensibility and taste, who, detesting blue-stockings, female politicians, and philosophers, had every reason for avoiding Madame Baciocchi, and instead became so intimate with her, was surprised at his infatuation.[2]

Fontanes, however, undoubtedly influenced her more than she did him, though it flattered her to consider she inspired his thoughts and actions, and was, in short, his Egeria. Elisa certainly gained much

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des Salons de Paris.*

[2] Ibid., *Mémoires.*

from this intimacy; Fontanes advised and directed her as far as possible, but she was not the most docile of pupils, and he could not always save her from her absurdities. Immersed in literature, she not only wrote a novel, a fact unknown to Napoleon until he was at St. Helena, which speaks little for the effect it produced, but conceived the idea of forming a literary club composed exclusively of women. Possibly she had in view golden opportunities for exercising power and practising the word of command which would fit her for the throne that she already saw looming in the distance. In any case, she resolved that only such women—of intelligence, be it understood—were to be admitted to this club, as possessed the good taste to desire her for its president.

She was soon inundated with demands for admission. As she was the sister of the First Consul, people complacently endured her whims in the hope doubtless of some day profiting more substantially from them than from her more or less interesting lectures. Members having been recruited, a date was fixed for the first meeting, at which the constitution of the club was to be discussed, as well as the style and colour of the costume to be worn by the members.

So important a meeting might well have been stormy. Madame Baciocchi, assuming an air of authority, seated herself in the presidential chair—it was second nature to members of her family upon beholding any seat raised above the crowd to hasten to sit in it—and presided majestically without perceiving that she resembled the leader of a gathering of lunatics. Disregarding the liberty of discussion,

and never dreaming that her ideas would not be unanimously accepted, she had selected the costume of the members in advance, and appeared in it in order that the merits of the said costume, as well as those of the president, might at the same time be better appreciated.

"A muslin veil embroidered in silk of every colour and edged with gold was wound round her head, on which rested a wreath of laurel *à la* Petrarch and Dante. She wore a long sleeveless tunic and a skirt with a short train, and over her shoulders was an immense shawl arranged like a mantle. It was a costume suggestive of the Jew, the Greek, the Roman, in fact of everything except good French taste." [1] And common sense, might have added the witty chronicler, who has so ridiculed the literary masquerade of this *soi-disant* blue-stocking.

After this one can understand the sort of conquest that Madame Baciocchi made of M. de Fontanes. Surely such eccentricities as hers, coupled with her absurd efforts in prose and verse, could not fail to amuse the most serious poet-philosopher. For she must have been droll enough with her literary and amorous caprices. As for that *bon et rebon* Baciocchi, he accommodated himself to whatever pleased his wife so thoroughly that had he shared her literary pretensions he might have written a treatise on the art of accommodating oneself to circumstances. "He endured," says Mademoiselle Avrillon, "all that his wife made him suffer without complaining, or rather, he sought consolation elsewhere."

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

The happy couple lived with Lucien in his house in the Rue Saint-Dominique. Here Elisa received her more or less cultured friends and posed as a woman of taste, who though not deigning to write herself, perhaps because her attempts had proved her incapacity, nevertheless enjoyed the society of men of letters, of philosophers and artists. It was her ambition to play the *rôle* that Madame Geoffrin had played in the eighteenth century, and which Madame Récamier knew so well how to assume and perfect to her own and her friends' mutual profit. But Madame Baciocchi had only one point in common with these two justly celebrated women: like them she completely effaced her husband.

One naturally met Fontanes in her *salon*, and also his friend Chateaubriand, whose literary fame since the publication of his *Génie de Christianisme* surrounded him like a halo. Another friend of Fontanes, Boufflers, a former literary light of the old *régime*, was also seen there, as well as the poet Arnault, most poetical when writing prose, and Esménard and Andrieux, not to speak of Lucien himself, who since the rise of his brother and family seemed to have been bitten by a literary tarantula. There were, besides, several men of letters whose names were unknown save as they appeared on the list of those the State encouraged, thanks to the patronage of Lucien or his sister. Indeed, Elisa showed herself so considerate of the persons she admitted to her *salon*, that one day, when it became necessary to limit the number, she resolved, on the advice of Arnault, to reduce her literary circle by three-quarters!

Like Napoleon and Lucien, Madame Baciocchi had a mania for tragedy. It was impossible to enter her *salon* without hearing long citations of passages from Racine, or rather, from Corneille, who was her favourite author. For heroism, noble sentiments, duty performed in the face of a thousand dangers, the sublime appealed to her—though she did not practise them, be it understood. She would have found it more ridiculous than sublime to have made the least sacrifice of her likes and caprices, above all where it concerned her poor devil of a husband.

Lucien, who prided himself on his elocution, and if he did not desire a throne had at least no objection to a pedestal, had built a theatre in his fine new house at Neuilly. Here tragedies were performed. One day *Alzire* was acted, and Lucien played the part of Zamore, while Elisa took that of Alzire. The costumes were those of the period, the actors and actresses wearing flesh-coloured tights. But Napoleon was anything but pleased when he beheld his brother and sister performing in such a manner, and he remonstrated vehemently with Lucien.

"What!" he said, "when my first duty is to re-establish public decency, must my brother and sister appear almost naked on a mountebank stage! It is outrageous!" [1]

The performance was not very successful, for Lucien, at all events, was certainly not a comedian.

There was a theatre also at Malmaison, where *Alzire* was performed by the same actors; but if the costumes did not conform to the fashion in

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires.*

Peru in the sixteenth century, they were at least in conformity with Parisian conventionality. At the close of the performance Napoleon could not refrain from observing, within the hearing of more than one person—

"I trust this rendering of *Alzire* may be regarded as a parody." [1]

Madame Baciocchi, who overheard him, was much annoyed, but she continued all the same to act her tragic parts and to affect the woman of culture. This mania excited her brother's contempt also on another occasion. In her sharp, consequential voice Elisa was speaking of Rotrou's *Wenceslas*. Napoleon, who had recently heard Talma lecture on an act of this very piece, declared Wenceslas to have been an old fool, Ladislas a bad son and brother, and the play itself still worse. Then he began to praise Corneille.

"The *Cid*, *Horace*, *Cinna*," he said, "those are the sort of plays I like."

"Yes, yes," assented Elisa rather disdainfully, forgetting her love of the heroic and sublime; "yes, but . . ." and she recited some lines of Voltaire learnt by heart, in which the philosopher of Ferney makes an unjust and mean attack on the plays of Corneille.

Napoleon did not approve of this manner of treating his favourite.

"I should have made him a prince," he replied; and one can well believe it, seeing he was capable of making his sister Elisa a princess!

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*.

Madame Baciocchi's criticism annoyed him, and as she had the disagreeable faculty of embittering a discussion, the subject soon became irritating. Napoleon finished it by rising impatiently and saying as he departed—

"This is beyond endurance! You are a caricature of the Duchesse du Maine!"

The comparison was apt. The Duchesse du Maine, that fantastic little creature who has been justly described as one of the most *bizarre* productions of the eighteenth century, had in fact the same stubborn, domineering spirit as Elisa, though she laid down the law in a less authoritative and rude manner. The Duchesse du Maine took after the great Condé, her ancestor. Elisa took after her brother, the great Napoleon, whose feminine caricature she was quite as much as she was that of the Duchesse du Maine.

Though deeply offended by the contempt of her brother, Madame Baciocchi was too wise to show her anger; and it was owing to her influence in favour of Fontanes that the First Consul decided to appoint that academician President of the Corps Législatif. "This choice," says Madame de Rémusat, "appeared strange to some, but in view of the future Napoleon planned for the Corps Législatif he could scarcely have given it any other president than a man of letters." [1]

But if Madame Baciocchi succeeded in making her friend President of the Corps Législatif, she did not forget her husband, though it is true she remembered

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

him in order to get rid of him. She succeeded about this time in getting him appointed colonel of a dragoon regiment. The honest fellow knew better than contradict his wife, so he let her do as she pleased; besides, he was something of a soldier already. Had he not formerly been a captain? He therefore joined his regiment without protest, and consoled himself with the thought of the leisure the service would afford him in which to play his violin.



LUCIEN BONAPARTE, PRINCE OF CANINO

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IV

MADAME BACIOCCHI once passed a summer at Lucien's country house at Plessis-Chamant to act as hostess for her brother in company with the Marquise de Santa-Cruz. Madame de Santa-Cruz was a young woman whom Lucien had met while Ambassador at Madrid, and whom he had brought back with him from Spain as a sort of lady companion to while away the dulness of the long journey. At Plessis-Chamant, Lucien entertained a great deal, his guests consisting principally of military, political, and literary people. There were plenty of distractions of the kind then in vogue; one was to mystify certain of the company.

"Since it was known that the Desportes were not on good terms, Lucien found pleasure in assigning the husband and his young wife the same bedroom, which obliged M. Desportes to sleep in a chair. To vary this sort of fun, they slipped a fox into Fontanes' bed, and put jalap into the soup of a little musician nicknamed 'Flutteau-Miaow,' because of his skill in playing the flute and imitating the midnight cat." [1]

Another amusement was to frighten half to death

[1] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

a poor child, who had the misfortune to be a coward, by appearing in his room in the middle of the night entirely draped in white and carrying a lantern. Madame Junot, who was a frequent guest at Plessis-Chamant, relates this last cruel pastime with a relish that one would hardly have expected of a woman of her kind nature.[1]

They also took pleasure in acting and watching one another act tragedies. Madame Baciocchi, who directed this little court somewhat on the lines of that of Rambouillet, delighted to devise and participate in all these amusements as well as to receive the homage of the guests, who treated her as if she were a queen. Their homage, however, was not entirely disinterested; more than one ambition lurked beneath all this nonsense. Nevertheless, the time passed pleasantly enough for Madame Baciocchi. The officers paid court to her, the politicians and diplomatists flattered her, and the poets dedicated their verses to her. One day the poet Casti dedicated a madrigal to her, which was discovered the following morning stuck in the mirror of the mantelpiece of the *salon*. Elisa was charmed with this madrigal, which played upon the words *bacio* and *occhi*, in honour of the eyes of Madame Baciocchi, who, says Méneval very gallantly, had very beautiful ones.[2]

The sisters of the First Consul seeing a future without bounds opening to his ambition, and conse-

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*.

[2] Méneval, *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Napoléon*.

quently to their own, endeavoured—with the exception of Pauline, whose sole ambition at the moment was to please her actor-lover, Lafon, of the Comédie Française—to create a following of devoted admirers for themselves as their brother had done. This gave them a certain importance which Napoleon had to take into account when they urged him to grant some favour he was loth to accord.

Madame Baciocchi, on her side, devoted all her energies to forming a connection with authors, financiers, and politicians. But being naturally cold and selfish, she failed to win the sympathy of those she wished to subjugate. The following is a case in point:—

Desiring to become acquainted with M. de la Harpe, Madame Baciocchi one day requested Madame Récamier to invite them both to dine. Astonished by this familiarity, which her own acquaintance with Madame Baciocchi scarcely warranted, Madame Récamier did as she was asked. But, she writes, "it seemed as if the members of the First Consul's family had begun to assume the manners of princes, and appeared to consider that they honoured those who entertained them."[1] There were only eight at table, Madame Récamier and her mother, Madame Bernard, Madame de Staël, Madame Baciocchi, M. de la Harpe, the Comte Louis de Narbonne, and M. Mathieu de Montmorency. Madame Récamier played the part of hostess to perfection, as usual, and conversation was flowing with all the animated grace one would expect from such table companions,

[1] *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier.*

when suddenly a note was handed Madame Bernard. She glanced at it as soon as she could do so unobserved, ran her eye over the contents, uttered a cry, and fell back senseless.

They hastened to her side, and did everything to restore her to life. Madame Récamier tore the fatal letter from her mother's hands and devoured its contents, which were to the effect that M. Bernard had been arrested and imprisoned in the Temple. All present were filled with dismay save Madame Baciocchi, who appeared constrained and bored. For in her eyes the grief of Madame Récamier and Madame Bernard, as well as the sympathy of their friends, was in a measure a reproach to the government of the First Consul, and consequently an indirect reflection on her as his sister.

Madame Récamier in her musical voice, pathetically broken with sobs, said to her—

"Madame, that same Providence which has made you a witness of the misfortune which has befallen us, wishes without doubt to constitute you my saviour. It is imperative I should see the First Consul this very day, without fail, and I count on you, Madame, to obtain this interview for me."

As this was very natural on her part, she was completely astonished when Madame Baciocchi replied in a constrained manner—

"It strikes me you would do well to consult Fouché in the first instance, that you may learn exactly how matters stand. Then if it be necessary for you to see my brother, you can come and tell me, and we will see what can be done."

She seemed in nowise to feel the embarrassment of leaving a house to which she had invited herself to dine at a moment when a unique, almost providential, occasion presented itself to her of discharging her indebtedness, and which she did not appear in any hurry to take advantage of. She should have gone at once to her powerful brother and demanded from him the instant release of the father of the friend she was so anxious to make, but instead of saying "I am going to my brother and will bring you myself M. Bernard's pardon," she said, "I am going to the theatre; you go to Fouché and then come to me with the result."

It was odious. She alone of them all failed to perceive her want of feeling and lack of breeding. While she went to the play Madame Récamier sought the Minister of Police.

"It is a very serious matter," said Fouché, "but see the First Consul this very evening, and make certain the accusation is not filed, otherwise M. Bernard is lost."

Overwhelmed with fear, Madame Récamier flew to the Théâtre-Français, and reached the box where Elisa was sitting with her sister Pauline. Madame Baciocchi was not sufficiently mistress of herself to refrain from a movement of impatience. At such a moment Madame Récamier passed it by, but later she recalled it when describing this episode in her life.

"I come, Madame," she said, "to claim the fulfilment of your promise. It is necessary I should speak with the First Consul this very night, or my father is a lost man!"

"Very well," coldly replied Madame Baciocchi, "let us wait till the tragedy is finished; when the curtain falls I am at your service."

At this moment Pauline, who had no eyes save for her lover, the actor Lafon, who was then on the stage, suddenly cried—

"Have you ever seen Lafon before as Achilles?" And without waiting for an answer she went on, "But only see, Madame, how quaintly he has put on his helmet! *Pardi*,[1] it is all awry! How silly!"

All this foolish chatter must have been a veritable agony to Madame Récamier. But General Bernadotte chanced also to be in the box. He shrugged his shoulders on hearing the absurdities of Pauline, and rising, said to Madame Baciocchi—

"Madame Récamier appears to be in great trouble; if she will permit me I will escort her home, and myself go to the First Consul."

"The very thing," replied Madame Baciocchi hastily, who saw with pleasure the brother-in-law of Joseph undertaking the assault of General Bonaparte. "You are in luck, Madame," she added, turning towards Madame Récamier; "place yourself absolutely in General Bernadotte's hands; no one is in a better position to serve you."[2]

That same evening Bernadotte went to the First Consul and obtained his assurance that the charge against M. Bernard should not be pressed.

[1] This was a favourite expression used by her on all occasions.

[2] *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier.*



BERNADOTTE, AFTERWARDS KING OF SWEDEN

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On another occasion Madame Baciocchi appealed to her brother in person. She took with her a copy of *Atala*, which had just appeared, and said, with a little air of satisfaction as she made him a present of it, that she hoped he would read it. The First Consul glanced at the title, and replied—

"What, another of your novels! I assure you I have no time to waste in reading all your trash." And he placed the book on his desk.

Madame Baciocchi then asked him to erase the name of Chateaubriand from the list of the Emigrés.

"So, it is by Chateaubriand!" he said. "Well, I will read it, and I will do what you wish." And he erased the name then and there.

In March, 1804, Madame Baciocchi suddenly learnt that the Duc d'Enghien had been shot at Vincennes. Men and women were equally and deeply moved by this execution; Elisa like the others, and even more so, for "she wrote the First Consul a letter composed by Fontanes, in return for which he found fault with her, though not harshly."[1]

The public were well aware of the efforts Josephine had made, though unsuccessfully, to obtain from Napoleon the pardon of the Duc d'Enghien. After the trial of General Moreau and the condemnation of Messieurs de Polignac and de Rivière and the other accomplices in the Royalist conspiracy, it became equally well known that the Empress had striven to save their lives also. This time her efforts were successful in the cases of Polignac and Rivière, and her popularity was increased in Paris in consequence.

[1] Comte Lavalette, *Mémoires*.

Jealous of her popularity, the sisters of the Emperor also wished to be popular. Pardons were granted on their recommendation. Elisa, who had dared to protest against the execution of the Duc d'Enghien (it was the noblest action she ever performed), was the leader in this campaign of clemency. Being on friendly terms with her sisters, which was not often the case, "she informed the wives of the condemned that they might appeal to them. They drove them to Saint-Cloud in their own carriages that they might solicit the pardon of their husbands in person. This manœuvre, of which the Emperor had been previously informed, was somewhat less spontaneous than the Empress's, because it appeared to have been too cleverly preconcerted. Nevertheless it had the effect of saving the lives of a certain number of persons, which was, after all, the only thing that really mattered." [1]

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

V

FROM the moment the Empire was proclaimed the sisters of Napoleon became more and more jealous of their sister-in-law, the Empress Josephine. On the very day of the proclamation there was a large family dinner at Saint-Cloud, when for the first time Napoleon and Josephine were addressed as "Your Majesty." To the sisters of the Emperor it seemed as if the sound of this title applied to their brother's wife made their ears tingle. All three regarded it as a crushing blow. But when Hortense, the daughter of their enemy, was addressed as "Your Highness," and given the rank of princess, they, who were neither Highnesses nor princesses, found it impossible to conceal their jealousy.

Madame Baciocchi, more mistress of herself than her sister Caroline, who began to weep, "comported herself in a brusque, domineering manner, and treated the ladies of the palace with a marked hauteur." [1] This seemed to afford her comfort, but not for long. The next day the three sisters complained to the Emperor that he was doing nothing for them, and that the situation of inferiority in which they found themselves was a sore humiliation. The Emperor's reply is celebrated.

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

"Truly, Mesdames," he said, "considering your pretensions, one might suppose we inherited the crown from the late king, our father."

But with his usual generosity, where members of his family were concerned, he granted his sisters the title of "princess," and the decree by which they were created "Imperial Highnesses" was duly registered in the *Moniteur*.

This, however, was far from satisfying them. The First Consul had been Emperor barely a few months before his sisters each desired a crown, and began to persecute him to procure them one. As usual, the Emperor ended by yielding to their importunity. Madame Baciocchi, who had now become the Princess Elisa, was the first to be provided with a State.

On March 18, 1805, Napoleon appeared in the Senate, and announced with great ceremony that the State Council of the Republic of Italy had come to offer him the "iron crown," and that he had accepted it. At the same time he announced that he had given the State of Piombino to the Princess Elisa, his sister, and desired her to be recognised as hereditary Princess of Piombino. Napoleon gave as his reasons that this State was badly governed, and that it was to the interest of France to put an end to such a condition of affairs, for he wished it to be understood that, in entrusting this principality to his sister, he was acting, not from feelings of mere brotherly affection, but from motives of good and prudent policy, equally for the interests of the people and for the glory of the Crown.

The Imperial decree ordained that the children of

the Princess Elisa should succeed their mother, that the Emperor of the French should invest them with their rights, and that they could not contract marriages without his consent. The title of Prince of Piombino was also conferred on M. Baciocchi, who at the same time was given the command of the troops charged with the defence of the coasts and communications between the Isle of Elba and Corsica.

Fouché had been no stranger to the determination of Napoleon to grant to his sister the sovereignty of Piombino. He thus sought to build up an influence and support outside and beyond the Imperial favour he enjoyed, and to attach Elisa to himself by ties of gratitude in case of need. As to Napoleon, he had another motive than that of rendering the people of the State of Piombino happy by sending his sister to govern them; he had even a further reason than the happiness of Elisa herself, whose ambition, now that she had become a reigning sovereign, began to be satisfied. For, above all, he desired to cut short certain love episodes, more or less scandalous, in which his sister had figured in Paris. In these intrigues Fouché had found the way, through quite personal services, to assure himself of the gratitude of the Princess.

"On entering the ministry," he says, "chance offered me means to conciliate Elisa; twice in succession I gave two men their liberty, Hin . . . and Les . . ., in whom she was very much interested, and who, with the shortest possible gap between them, became indispensable to her tender fancy. One in his character of farmer of the revenue was

pursued by the Emperor with determination; the other, more obscure, had engulfed himself in a shocking affair. It was not without some difficulty I managed in the end to hush up everything." [1]

Elisa was naturally intoxicated with happiness to possess a crown, but after a short time she was unable to prevent herself from discovering that it was "very small for her head." She complained of this to her brother, who, unable to refuse anything to a member of his family, promised her to enlarge it in the near future. During a visit to Italy, which he made this same year, a deputation from the Principality of Lucca came to him at Bologna and begged him to take their country under his exalted keeping by annexing it to the French Empire.

The Emperor had no inclination to accept the offer of the delegates from Lucca, but he gave them a Constitution and the Princess Elisa to watch its working. His sister, who had accompanied him on his trip to Italy, was overjoyed to receive the sovereignty of the State of Lucca, which she joined to that of Piombino, the governance of which had been assigned her by a decree of the Senate three months before.

But these two principalities did not yet suffice to satisfy the mounting ambition of the former pupil of Saint-Cyr, and the Emperor later on threw her a larger morsel to keep her quiet. In 1808 he gave her the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

It is only fair to her to state that she seconded, to the best of her ability, her brother's policy; but her

[1] Fouché, *Mémoires*.

ill-regulated passions and absolute lack of moral sense did great harm to the government and the person of the Emperor. She also zealously seconded his family schemes. In 1807 she did her best to influence Lucien, who thought himself independent because, instead of being under the thumb of his brother, he was under the thumb of his wife, to cease opposing Napoleon. Under date of the 20th June she wrote him as follows:

"My Dear Lucien,—

"I have received your letter. Permit my friendship some reflections on the actual state of affairs. I trust you will not be vexed by my remarks, for my fondness for you and yours could never change.

"You were made certain proposals a year ago which you should have found suitable, and which for the sake of your wife's happiness and that of your family you should have accepted on the spot. To-day you refuse them afresh; do you not see, dear friend, that the only way to prevent adoptions is to leave His Majesty the undisputed right to control his family? By remaining near Napoleon, or by receiving a throne from him, you will be useful to him. He will provide for your daughters, and so long as he finds in his own family the possibility of executing his political projects, which mean everything to him, he will not select strangers. One must not treat the master of the world as an equal, for though Nature made us all children of the same father, his wondrous actions have made us his subjects. However sovereign we may be, we owe

everything to him. We should be proud to acknowledge it, and it seems to me that our sole glory should be in proving ourselves by our manner of governing worthy of him and of our family.

"Therefore, reconsider the proposals that have been made you. Mamma and all of us ought to be happy to be as one in politics. Dear Lucien, do this for us who love you, for the people my brother will give you to rule and whose hope you will become.

"Farewell, and believe that, whatever you decide on, my affection for you will always remain the same. Give my love to your wife and your dear family. The Chevalier Angelino, who has been to see me, spoke a great deal of you and yours. My little girl is a dear,[1] and I shall be so glad when she can play with your children.

"Your sister and friend,

"ELISA."[2]

This letter is very interesting from more than one point of view. First of all it proves the intense *esprit de famille* of the Bonapartes, which existed to the end in spite of many failings and treachery; moreover it proves how fond Elisa was of politics and power, how completely she shared the opinions of Napoleon, since she endeavoured to second them by writing to Lucien of her own accord to abandon his resistance, or at least to stop quarrelling and sulking. In this respect, however, it may be remarked here that Elisa did not always herself conform to the wise principles

[1] Napoleone Elisa, born June 3, 1805.

[2] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*



PRINCE BACIOCCHI AND HIS COURT AT FLORENCE

(After Benvenuti)

From M. Paul Marmottan's "Les Arts en Toscane," by kind permission of M. Honoré Champion

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she sought to instil into her brother. Finally, this letter is a proof that in his family itself, as General de Ricard has written, Napoleon was regarded as a superhuman being.

The Princess of Lucca and Piombino, however, being eager to taste the sweets of sovereignty, went to take possession of her estates. She at once took her *métier* of ruler very seriously. Like his haughty wife, Prince Baciocchi also took his unlooked-for elevation very seriously. To pass from colonel of the 26th regiment of the line to second in command of the principality of Lucca and Piombino, of which his wife was the commander-in-chief, was something to be proud of. And he was, if General Pouget is to be believed, who, when he was appointed colonel to the regiment that Prince Baciocchi had just left, saw him in the first stage of the intoxication of power.

"I made it my duty," he says, "to call and offer him my respects, and inquire if he had any messages or commands for his former regiment. He was at table with his aide-de-camp, and received me very coldly, said little, and acted generally like an ill-bred prince, giving me no messages from him to any of his former officers. In leaving him, I reflected on the effect of pride and rank suddenly acquired." [1]

The Emperor did not like to discuss, or rather that any one should discuss, the orders he gave. He wished to be obeyed unquestioningly. Eugene, in this respect, as Viceroy of Italy, was the most compliant of vassals, a model of docility. But with Elisa,

[1] *Souvenirs de guerre du Général Baron Pouget.*

whom Napoleon knew he would not find equally adaptable, he had almost no correspondence, allowing her to govern her principality as she pleased, as if it were a sort of tributary dependency of which she was the absolute sovereign.

Talleyrand called her, not without mocking irony, the "Semiramis of Lucca." She began by making her husband a sort of minister of war and commander-in-chief at one and the same time. She had her court and her chamberlains, among others M. de Lucchesini, former Prussian Ambassador to Paris under the Consulate. As for herself, mounted on horseback and affecting a military pose and manners, she inspected reviews of her little army. Following Napoleon's example, she commenced large public buildings and performed the duties of a highway commissioner.[1] Furthermore, since the duties of sovereigns towards their people embrace all spheres of activity and human understanding, she began to study the constitutions of empires. In this branch of her researches she received valuable assistance from Lespérut, a former private secretary of Marshal Berthier. With him she made laws, drew up a constitution, and organised a system of government.

To judge from the letters the princess wrote to

[1] "Lucca is a small town which did not then afford, and probably does not afford to-day, anything of interest out of the common beyond the imprint it keeps of the Imperial *régime*, as sand retains footprints. The Princess Elisa, otherwise called Mme. Baciocchi, had modelled it after Saint-Cloud or Compiègne belonging to her brother, and such as she left it such we found it in 1816, and I have found it again much the same since 1840." —*Souvenirs du feu Duc de Broglie.*

the Emperor, which are preserved in the National Archives, her clergy gave her at first much trouble. But imperious and domineering, she made everybody, priests and monks as well as the others, toe the mark by a shake of the finger or a glance of the eye. She could talk about administration like a veritable prefect.

"If the public debt," she wrote under date of June 7, 1806, "the pensions and charges imposed on my States are not diminished, they will absorb more than half the revenues. Never in France, under the rule of your predecessors, did the debt exceed the quarter, while under your Empire it is barely a sixth, of the proceeds."

When Napoleon, who promoted sovereigns as he did generals, raised her to the dignity of Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Elisa was able to perform on a larger stage and to afford the world a more exalted idea of her abilities. Her title of Grand Duchess made her almost a queen, but she reigned more than an actual one. Like her brothers and sisters, she had a mania for imitating the manners and poses and aping the gestures of Napoleon, thinking, perhaps, that she was at the same time borrowing his genius.

Scarcely had she arrived in Florence when she made it one of her first cares to form a court in imitation of that of her powerful brother. All the descendants of the noble families in the country, rich persons, or those merely occupying a good position, even women for their beauty alone, received invitations, if not commands, to appear at the budding court. They did not require much pressing, and

courtiers soon flocked around the new sovereign. This was one way of creating a following, and practised with discretion and dignity it would certainly have produced, and that rapidly, good results. But she did not proceed altogether on these lines, and the day the Princess Elisa was obliged to descend from her throne she complained with bitter mortification of the ingratitude of her subjects.

Her court was mounted on a grand scale. Maids of honour, chamberlains, equerries, pages, almoners, chaplains, nothing was lacking to it. This gilded *valetaille* was, so to speak, the pick of the basket; which, however, did not prevent Elisa from choosing as her reader the former mistress of Generals Marescot, Moreau, Ney, &c., Madame Ida Saint-Elme, an adventuress who afterwards published eight volumes of curious memoirs. Each possessed a great name or a great title, or at least a great pride in self-abasement. The creation of this court, which owed its existence to vanity, proved, nevertheless, a powerful political instrument, thanks to the eagerness of all who boasted noble blood in Tuscany to fill the antechambers of the palace of the new sovereign. Elisa recognised the usefulness of this instrument, but she did not know how to draw all the advantage from it she might have done.

When the *personnel* of her court was selected and appointed it was necessary, as at the Tuileries, to regulate its etiquette. This is an important matter in every court. There were endless discussions on the manner of doing this thing and that, inside and outside the palace, a private reception, a public cere-

mony, a review, a ball, a mass. All these frivolities seriously occupied the court of the Grand Duchess. The well-to-do portion of the population was interested from sheer curiosity in these important trivialities, and the gradual blending of sense and sentiment little by little seemed to accustom people to the blare of *fêtes* and concerts, which contrasted strangely with the clash of arms that resounded from end to end of shuddering Europe, a menacing and certain premonition of the shocks which were once more to shake the Old World. But these *fêtes* did not in the least prevent Elisa from paying great attention to the army and the administration.

She did what she could to make herself popular. To appear as amiable as possible, she only spoke Italian when conversing with those persons of her court who were not French, which she considered a delicate flattery not unpleasing to her subjects. Furthermore, she ordered that public decrees, instead of being announced only in French, should be made in both languages. She paid, too, no regard to expense and scattered gold with open hands. Napoleon had made over to her two millions a year of the four millions which Tuscany contributed to the Empire. So, more in love with power than with her lovers, assured as to the future, voluntarily blinding herself to certain dark clouds which commenced to loom on the horizon, and wishing to enjoy her throne, she set to work heart and soul to govern her states, holding reviews at which she paraded on horseback in front of the troops, brow-beating her generals, retiring or appointing them according to her fancy, and

displaying in everything a martial air. She even had a squadron of cavalry as a bodyguard.

But her ways, which resembled those of a Prussian corporal, seemed strange to the Florentines, who have ever preferred to cultivate the arts of peace to those of war. The Princess Elisa, however, who had posed at Paris as a lover and patron of literature, had an excellent opportunity here to testify her interest in the universities of Pisa and Florence, formerly so celebrated and which on her coming had already begun to decline, and continued to still more under her *régime*. But now that she had ascended a throne she did not appear to deem literature worthy to occupy her precious time; and politics, as so often happens, benefited at the expense of letters.

Clerical matters especially engaged her attention, and she wished to completely subdue the recalcitrant Italian priesthood.

"It is time," she wrote the Emperor, "that the temporal power should be kept within proper bounds and cease to swing the censer." She certainly will not be imposed upon. "Vain outcries may intimidate ordinary people, but the menaces of fanaticism have always been the accompaniment of weakness, and I shall not even bother your Majesty with the dangers with which it would like to force my submission to its will." [1]

Elisa must have tingled with pleasure to the roots of her hair when writing the Emperor these sonorous phrases by which she affirmed her power over the clergy, and which placed her in her own esteem

[1] *Archives Nationales.*

above everybody. She was, besides, fully aware of her importance.

"I await your orders, sire, and whatever they may be I shall obey them with that firmness and prudence which shall always characterise my conduct." Again, she writes, "Sire, I have received your letter of the 17th May. My prudence and firmness have removed every obstacle. The national guard is submissive; the clergy remain in possession of the birth, death, and marriage certificates; I do not expel either monks or nuns. Those of the same orders are united and I assign houses for the others. The drain of my treasury will in consequence be very considerable, but I have reduced fanaticism to silence, the people are contented, prejudices are respected, opposition is destroyed, and your orders are executed."

But, though she affected to despise the people whom she declared "contented," and who on the contrary were crushed with taxes and almost reduced to despair, she could not prevent herself from fearing them. This her letter, June 3, 1809, to the Emperor proves.

"The religious orders," she wrote, "are submissive, but I am very dissatisfied with the secular clergy. The people are superstitious, tranquil, and cowardly. I have brought sixty carabineers here from Piombino to strengthen the palace guard, which was next to nothing. However, I am not in the least uneasy."[1]

But say what she might, she was afraid of the people whom she called cowardly, and who, in spite of her, refused to be contented. Of this there

[1] *Archives Nationales.*

is clear proof in the same letter, from which it seems there was a conspiracy against her.

"The plan was to disorganise the whole administration; already the principal officials had resigned, the Secretary of State had dared to refuse to countersign the decrees of the prince, and the priests promised these fanatics the palm of martyrdom. Exile and prison should have sufficed to cool their fervour, but I informed your Majesty on the 29th May of their repentance and of the pardon I granted them. I was content with making sufficient examples." [1]

A few days later, on the 7th of June, she adds:—

"The archbishop has completely submitted. I have exacted from him a public profession of loyalty and the command, of which I send you a copy, has sufficed to calm the consciences and to overcome the resistance of the secular clergy." [2]

[1] *Archives Nationales.* [2] Ibid.

VI

AS for Baciocchi, he continued as usual to find everything perfect. Under the Consulate, at the same time his wife changed her name from Marianne to Elisa, he had been obliged to relinquish his name of Paschal. It was good enough for a Marianne, they might have lain side by side in a lottery; but to cut a figure by the side of an Elisa it was necessary to have a less common name. Moreover, the name of Paschal was as ridiculous in Italy as that of Jocrisse or Paillasse in France. So after much hesitation his wife decided on Felix for him as being pretty and more suitable, whatever might be said to the contrary, to the name he had borne at the time of his marriage. For ought he not to be *happy* as the husband of Elisa?

As general commanding the 29th Military Division at Florence, Baciocchi was under the immediate supervision of his wife. He obeyed her in all she required and shut his eyes to the rest. The whims of his superior were no concern of his. To speak the truth, Prince Felix Baciocchi had very little to do. He had no anxiety in regard to the administration of the Government or of his military division. All that was his wife's business. He limited himself,

idler that he was, to enjoy life *à la dolce far niente.* From time to time he appended his signature to some document at his aide-de-camp's request; people also came to solicit his favour, as in France they addressed themselves to Josephine in order to obtain a boon from the Emperor. Baciocchi was easily approached, and it flattered him to be addressed.

"I will mention it to the Grand Duchess," he invariably replied; "I will recommend your affair to her."

For the rest, this husband of a queen was in a thoroughly false position. He felt that as brother-in-law of the puissant Emperor of the French abilities were expected of him that he did not possess, and that his Grand Eagle of the Legion of Honour did not help him to play the least little eagle in life. He realised as well as his wife that she was the more gifted of the two; therefore not to risk seeing his high rank humiliated by his incapacity, which was no less great, he did nothing, thinking wisely that this was the best thing he could do.

He did not reside with his wife, which set a bad example, or at all events created a bad impression in Florence. But this arrangement accorded more freedom to both husband and wife. He lived in a charming house in the Via Pergola, and had, like his wife, his little court, which, like hers, was almost exclusively composed of officers. One knows how loose morals were among all classes in society at this epoch. The court of Napoleon, which was their standard, had not a reputation for prudery; the army for its part had never aspired to such, and a lady

chronicler of the times, Madame Ida Saint-Elme, still less so. She spoke thus of the court of Prince Felix Baciocchi :—

"Here there was still more liberty than at the official court of the Grand Duchess. There was a mixture of the military tone of the Empire and the light gallantry of another period; the war-like and jovial humour of the times made one excuse in some degree its licence and suggestiveness of the Parc-aux-Cerfs."[1]

If the Grand Duchess of Tuscany had her lovers, Prince Felix had his mistresses. This appears to have been part of the show, so to speak, and Elisa was most particular that her husband should represent her worthily in every respect. But she had small need to coach him on this point. He was kind and generous to his favourites and paid them like a prince. This pleased his wife, and as Elisa was so accustomed to command it was she herself, perhaps, who selected her husband's mistresses; for the understanding between them seems to have been too perfect for it to be otherwise. It was, as has been said, an ideal establishment. Besides, knowing that they could not live happily together unless they lived apart and ready to grant each other certain little mutual concessions, far removed from prejudices, they had ended by convincing themselves that honour, duty, morality, and the conventions were only suitable to ordinary mortals.

But as no sacrifice is too costly to good sovereigns where it concerns the welfare of their subjects, Elisa was frequently as careful of her reputation as she was

[1] Madame Ida Saint-Elme, *Mémoires*.

careless of her honour. As an instance in point, every evening this model pair went together to the theatre to exhibit to all Florence the touching spectacle of a happy family. Majestically seated in her box, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany received with dignity the delicate attentions of her august spouse; while their little daughter, the charming Napoleone Elisa,[1] sat between them and lent to their evening intimacy a touching something, difficult to define, which called forth feelings of sympathy and respect for a family so tenderly united.

The play over, the prince conducted the princess to her carriage, and having gallantly kissed her hand, wished her "*felicissima notte*," and retired. Elisa then returned to her palace and endeavoured to procure for herself the good night her husband had so graciously wished her, while he, in his house in the Via Pergola, sought to pass a night not less agreeable than the one he had bespoken for his wife.

The Grand Duchess of Tuscany, in going each evening to the theatre with her husband,[2] put in practice the second half of those convenient principles —if one can call them principles—which she had

[1] This little princess was married later on to a wealthy Italian nobleman, the Count Camerata. She was thoroughly masculine in character, imagination, and by nature. She strongly resembled Napoleon. In 1830 she formed a plot to remove the Duc de Reichstadt from Vienna. Arrived in the Austrian capital, she installed herself in the Hotel du Cygne, found means to place a letter in the hands of Napoleon's son, and even was able to speak with him, but her attempt was without result.

[2] She maintained at great cost a French *troupe* at Florence, and this company played alternately with the Italian *troupe*.



DUC DE REICHSTADT ("L'AIGLON)

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cynically formulated in a couple of lines to an indiscreet friend, "Live for yourself, follow your tastes and hide them, and do not invite the public to share your confidences." [1]

She followed the first part of this philosophy of life conscientiously, as one will readily admit, but she did not know how to practise the concealment she advocated. The public were not blind to the fact that she often went on expeditions on horseback with the Baron Cerami, whose name to French ears, the Italian *c* being pronounced *ch*, has a very intimate significance that was quite piquant under the circumstances. The baron was a very handsome man, brilliant, cultured, witty, attached to the prince, and even more so, it was reported, to the princess. . . .

During the heat of summer the Grand Duchess established her general headquarters, or rather her court, at Pisa.

It has been seen how well Elisa and her husband got on together, which seems to prove yet once again that to live happily together nothing is wanting but a good understanding. The Grand Duchess also showed herself a very complacent sister to Napoleon, or at all events as regards his policy. In 1810, at the moment when Pope Pius VII. was about to be transferred to Fontainebleau, there was a certain effervescence among the clergy of Florence; a few ecclesiastics even openly displayed their dis-

[1] *Mémoires d'une contemporaine.*

pleasure. But Elisa, accustomed to the obedience and discipline she imposed on her troops and on her court, energetically muzzled the malcontents, and immediately had one of their leaders, the Canon Muzzi, deported to the Isle of Elba. In reporting this to her powerful brother, on December 20, 1810, she said, "His great age prevented my showing greater severity."

The clement princess added that she had taken measures to prevent and repress at need all manifestations of discontent, and that the Emperor could rely upon her absolutely.

Meanwhile, not knowing if she would always be able to count on the protection of the Emperor, she sought to remain on good terms with all the great dignitaries of the Empire. For one never knows what may happen, and persons less important than oneself often prove of use. Consequently she cultivated such, and in making them presents she studied their individual weaknesses. Remembering what an epicure Cambacérès was, she sent him blackbirds from Corsica and delicacies of every description.

On the other hand, like a well-advised sovereign, she had ideas of aggrandisement for her States. No one could foresee the future, she mused, but who could tell what favourable circumstances might present themselves, which, instead of waiting for, it would be a wise policy to provoke. Corsica, for instance, which lay just opposite Leghorn, could, without inconvenience, be joined to her crown.

Cherishing this idea, but revealing it to none, she sent from Lucca, in 1811, a magnificent high-altar to

the Cathedral of Ajaccio. It was to pave the way and bid in advance for the favour of her fellow-countrymen whom she dreamed of making her subjects. People have been pleased to see in this gift made by the Grand Duchess of Tuscany to her native town the desire to prove that in her grandeur she did not forget her humble origin. But to consider it in this light is strangely to misunderstand the character of the princess. A disinterested sentiment would not take root in a nature so hard and selfish; ambition and egotism were her sole motives, and the gift to the Cathedral of Ajaccio was an investment from which she hoped one day to reap heavy interest. Events, however, caused the downfall of this little combination. For the times began to get out of joint, the nations were drained dry of blood and money, and the French Empire visibly declined.

The Grand Duchess Elisa, helpless to counteract the events which threatened to completely alter once again the map of Europe, could only await the coming evils. This she was doing with a resignation due rather to necessity than to inclination, when the disgrace of Fouché, who had incurred the Emperor's displeasure, brought that former Minister of Police to Florence. Appointed to replace General Junot, who had become insane, as Governor-General of the Illyrian Provinces, he had been forced to retreat before the Austrian invasion, and gradually to abandon these possessions. Sent as Governor to Rome, the troubled state of affairs in the peninsula had prevented his reaching that city; he was forced to halt in Florence, and there, at the court

of Elisa, he awaited the issue of events, participating in intrigues, of which he held the threads more or less entangled by a thousand different interests, unravelling or tangling them to suit his own interests and directing everything to his own advantage. All this, however, did not hinder him from posing to some as a person who had never acted save in the interests of his country.

In this critical state of affairs which affected everybody, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany had disbanded her theatrical *troupe* and sent her bodyguard of cavalry to the army; absorbed in affairs of state, she had recourse to the ripe experience of M. Fouché, and sought, or perhaps at first only listened to, his advice. It was he who from this moment, so he affirms in his Memoirs, became her political pilot. She did not hide from him the misgivings she entertained as to the solidity of the edifice her brother had constructed. She said openly that the Emperor should have reflected before he persisted in a struggle, the result of which she foresaw only too clearly, and she added naïvely that she would not have believed it possible her brother would have forgotten he was not merely placing his own position in jeopardy, but likewise the establishments of the members of his family. As far as she was concerned, the misfortunes of her country and of her brother, from whom all her greatness proceeded, affected her infinitely less than the dread of being dispossessed of all that her brother had given her!

Fouché was too clever not to discover under these complaints the thoughts which were seething in the

brain of the haughty and unscrupulous princess. He divined her fears, made her speak of them, saw how greatly she was attached to this power which had been the height of her ambition, and did not fail to remark the great grief with which she expected to see it finally escape from her grasp. So he set himself shamelessly to encourage her in this train of thought. He even took the liberty of blaming the Emperor, her brother, in her hearing. He said that at Dresden he had given him the most disinterested advice, having only in view his happiness and the welfare of France, adding that he had not concealed from him that he was staking his crown against all Europe in order to gain some barren victories, but that he would end by succumbing in the struggle. Nor did he hide from Elisa that the Emperor, blinded by an excessive pride, had not even honoured him by taking his advice into consideration. It was this, possibly, which Fouché found it most difficult to pardon in Napoleon, for the wounds of self-love never heal. And now, were not these prophecies about to be fulfilled? France was invaded, the fall of the Emperor could be but a question of weeks, perchance of days, of hours. . . .

Elisa permitted herself to admit all this. Her dignity no longer rebelled against hearing such statements made in her presence, nor did her heart rebel either when Fouché, throwing aside all disguise, dared accost her with these outrageous words:—

"Madame, there is but one way to save ourselves; it is to finish the Emperor on the spot!" [1]

[1] Rovigo, *Mémoires.*

But Fouché knew well to whom he was speaking; it was not to the sister, but to the ambitious and unscrupulous sovereign. Alas! what perfidy was this family not capable of!

And in the midst of circumstances so mournful for France, the princess chose this time, above all others, to be interested in frivolities! In a letter to her mother she asked for an account of the balls being given in Paris; as the following few lines, extracts from a letter which Madame Mère wrote her, under date of March 11, 1814, will testify:—

"I regret not being in a position to satisfy your inquiries respecting the balls which the Emperor gave during the Carnival. I was not present. My health, in addition to my age, debarred me. Furthermore, the journals afford a fuller account than any I could give you. . . ."[1]

At this moment France had been invaded for two months and a half, the whole Imperial edifice was crumbling away in the blood of her last defenders and in the sombre glory of their last heroic efforts, while the Princess Elisa, who had always posed as a political character, but had never dreamt of being a patriot, asked for details of balls! . . . Critical situations make petty minds reel, just as they cause selfish hearts to faint.

The former Minister of Police continued to give Elisa perfidious advice. Moreover, from Florence he directed in a measure the policy of Murat, insomuch

[1] Letter of Madame Mère to Elisa, given by the Empress Eugénie to M. le Baron Larrey and reproduced in his *Madame Mère.*



FOUCHÉ, DUC D'OTRANTE

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that the Kingdom of Naples and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany marched side by side, but not in the path of honour and duty. Murat, desirous to extend the limits of his little kingdom that he might have a better frame for the greatness of his ambition, found the occasion favourable for beginning a campaign. It is in times of great crises that intriguers best manage their personal affairs. He took possession of Rome and sent troops into Tuscany under the command of the Neapolitan General Minutolo, to seize in his name the states of his sister-in-law. He even went so far as to name one of his officers, General Joseph Lecchi, as governor!

Elisa found this proceeding rather violent; she could not forgive Murat for despoiling her thus cavalierly of all she most valued in this world. As to the people of Tuscany, who, according to several historians, loved the Grand Duchess Elisa, they did not on this occasion show her any sign of their attachment. On the contrary, they hailed the Neapolitan troops with acclamations, and fraternised with them, while the younger portion of the population, rejoicing at the imminent fall of the Grand Duchess, presented themselves in crowds before the Préfecture. The Prefect had the reputation of being very strict in regard to the question of conscription; to each conscript who presented himself to offer a valid reason for exemption, he invariably replied without even investigating his claims, "Suitable for marching." Conscription was the burden which weighed most heavily on these people; a change of rulers, above all the downfall of the Imperial sway, made them hope

for the suppression of this imposition of blood. Hence these young men, whom the hope of escaping military service rendered witty, repaired to the Préfecture and wrote in large letters on the door of the official who was packing his trunks, "Suitable for marching."

Distracted though she was by the terrible predicament in which she found herself, Elisa would, nevertheless, gladly have offered resistance, but how? She sought the advice of her friend Fouché. But he gave her to understand that in face of the general movement which was drawing her people towards the people of the other states of the Peninsula, she had nothing left to do but to retreat to Lucca or Leghorn. She could only resign herself to Fate. Yet it was hard to leave her capital, the beautiful city of Florence, where it had been so sweet to reign! Like Horace, she could say in her turn: "*Linquenda tellus et domus!*" Like Mazarin, given over by his physicians and contemplating with a tortured eye all the treasures to which he must bid an eternal farewell, she roamed through the galleries of the Pitti Palace and repeated in despair, "Alas! must I leave all this?"

However, at last, as she could not do otherwise, she determined to go, and departed for Lucca, derided by her populace and forgotten by her favourites. Particularly was she cut to the quick to see herself deserted by M. Cerami, which enabled her to prove the truth of the well-known fact that of those who pay court to sovereigns and likewise to women, be they sovereigns or not, it is invariably those who have

obtained the most who forget the most quickly. The fall from power taught her an important lesson in philosophy, and possibly she learned to know men better when she ceased to rule them than when she was on a throne.

VII

WHILE she was preparing for departure she sent her husband orders to prepare for the military evacuation of the country, and to lead out the army and to carry away as many supplies as possible from the arsenals and fortresses, in short, to save everything he could. Prince Felix Baciocchi obeyed this order as he was accustomed to obey all others. He shut himself up in the citadel of Florence, put the forts of the city in a state of defence, as well as that of Volterra, appointed as commanders the officers who inspired him with the most confidence, and awaited the moment of—capitulation. This moment was not long delayed, and in his turn Prince Felix was reduced to the necessity of leaving Florence, accompanied, like his wife before him, by the ridicule of the populace.

It was remembered that he had changed his name of Paschal, ridiculous in Italy, to that of Felix, signifying "happy." His good subjects of Florence saw a chance to play upon the words Felix and Paschal, and the husband of the Grand Duchess, as he left the city, heard the street arabs and roughs bellow into his ears, "When he was Felix we were unhappy, now he becomes again Paschal we shall be happy!" [1]

[1] "*Quando eri felice, eravamo pasquali; adesso che sei ritornato pasquale, saramo felici.*"

The fall of a sovereign sometimes gives birth to a complicated sentiment on the part of the people, even when they are responsible for the downfall, a sentiment which arises from generosity and is made up of regret and sympathy. This was not the case, however, in the present instance, and the double departure was enveloped in a cloud of ridicule.

Nevertheless, the Grand Duchess, as devoid of political understanding as she was of the moral sense, dreamed of ways by which she could come to terms with Murat, whose fortune now seemed to her more assured than that of Napoleon. Fouché, who had accompanied her in her flight, held more firmly than ever the various threads of intrigue. He was the rallying-point of all the treasons in Italy. Murat, Elisa, Eugène, all these political weathercocks received from him their orders, and executed them according to the audacity or prudence of their temperaments, only endeavouring, so to speak, to pull their own chestnuts out of the fire.

At Lucca, Fouché made known to the Grand Duchess that Murat had signed a treaty of alliance with Austria; he did not conceal from her that this power as well as England was very suspicious of the good faith of the King of Naples. The Italian people for their part possessed no confidence in this former Marshal of the Empire and brother-in-law of Napoleon. They accused him of intriguing with France, of deceiving the Italians. In the midst of all these coils, of these contrary interests and conjugal difficulties, Murat, as the result of the base advice he had followed, fell ill of grief. His soul was

not formed for treason; he had not the heart of his wife, and Caroline had the heart of a man. But Murat had no character; if he had possessed it he would never have yielded to the wilful perfidy of his queen, never would he have played the traitor. He had the misfortune to be ruled by his wife, and like the majority of men who share this weakness, he did not fail to expiate his fault: he had lost his dignity, thanks to which he lost his honour while waiting to lose his life.

He determined to send his generals orders to treat with Fouché on the subject of the evacuation of Tuscany. On his side Fouché had received from the Emperor the necessary powers to treat regarding the evacuation of the same province by the French troops who still remained there. These were concentrated for the most part at Leghorn; there were also several battalions at Pisa, five leagues from Leghorn. A few skirmishes took place between these and the Neapolitan soldiery. At length a treaty was signed, in virtue of which the French troops were to abandon Tuscany, fall back on Genoa, and re-enter France.

On top of these side-acts, Lord Bentinck had disembarked at Leghorn at the head of a body of English troops. He informed the Grand Duchess Elisa that he did not recognise her authority, that in future Tuscany must obey the behests of England until her fate had been decided, and that pending that event it was he (Lord Bentinck) in whom all power was vested.

The English troops joined forces with those of the

King of Naples, who had become the ally of Great Britain, and occupied the principal places in Tuscany. Elisa was therefore, to her shame, as a punishment possibly for having turned her back on her brother and for having vainly tried to make an alliance with Murat, who had despoiled her, not permitted by the English to retain Tuscany. She was forced to fly. But flight for her just now was exceptionally difficult. She was on the eve of confinement, as well as at the sunset of her glories, and could only journey by short, painful stages. Yet from every side alarming tidings poured in upon her, the Austrian troops approached. . . .

At last one day the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, who had now become a very small personage, found herself in the pains of child-birth. Brought to bed in a wretched inn, she gave birth to a son, as Mademoiselle Avrillon, lady-in-waiting to the Empress Josephine, expressed it, "at a moment when she ceased to have need of an heir." [1] She was arrested by the Austrians at Bologna and conducted under escort to Brünn, as a prisoner of war. She had to do her own packing in haste, under the very eyes of the Austrian officers and subalterns, who filled her chamber. For her the *rôle* of sovereign was past, long past; she could only say to herself, "*E finita la comedia!*"

[1] This son died at Rome in consequence of a fall from a horse in 1833. The Princess Elisa had another son, who died in 1830 at the age of twenty. The only son of her daughter, Napoleone Elisa, who, as stated in a previous note, married Count Camerata, committed suicide in 1853.

From the beautiful dream in which she had lived so long she had indeed been rudely awakened.

Elisa had wished to establish herself at Rome, as the following letter shows, which she wrote to one of her friends, the Duc de X——, on April 15, 1814; but she never had the least intention of repairing to the Isle of Elba to be near her brother, as may be gathered from the same letter :—

"Well, then, this frightful catastrophe has come at last. All is lost. I have made up my mind to depart for Naples. I will never reside on the Isle of Elba. I want to fix my abode in Rome, if the French Government finds no objections and if the Pope permits it. . . . Do your best for me with the Prince of Benevento; we are proscribed, all the world unites to crush us! . . ." [1]

But she was not allowed to repair either to Rome or Naples. Confined at Brünn, the ex-Princess of Piombino and Lucca, the ex-Grand Duchess of Tuscany, found that the air of that city did not agree with her. She asked permission to go and live in the country. But this was refused her. Later, in 1815, a few days before the departure of Napoleon from Elba, she wrote her sister-in-law, the Empress Marie-Louise, praying her to beg permission from her father, the Emperor Francis, to suffer her to return to France. Marie-Louise, in spite of her indifference to the family of her husband, only equalled by her indifference to her husband himself, obligingly transmitted this re-

[1] Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*



JEROME BONAPARTE, KING OF WESTPHALIA

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quest to her father. He, however, would not consent, nor did he even trouble to reply to the request of her who not long since was the proud Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

As in prosperity she had changed her Christian name, in adversity she changed her surname. It was, moreover, a custom, if not a consolation, among crowned heads, or rather uncrowned ones. The ex-King Joseph became known as Comte de Survilliers; the ex-King Jerome, Comte de Montfort; the ex-King of Holland, Comte de Saint-Leu; the ex-Queen of Naples, a little latter, became Comtesse de Lipona, the former pupil of Saint-Cyr took the name of Comtesse de Campignano.

After these rude trials of humiliation and disgrace, the Comtesse de Campignano tried in 1816 to make amends for the wrongs she had inflicted on Napoleon. She wrote him from Bologna, where she had been living since the month of September, 1814, that she wished to come and join him at Saint-Helena and afford him by her presence those consolations which might soften his lot. But this offer could never be realised.

The changes which so affected her family, especially those which more nearly struck home, perhaps also self-reproaches on more than one score, sapped her health. Her constitution, though robust, could not withstand adversity. After attempting flight, inspired chiefly by the desire to flee, so to speak, from herself by providing herself with activity and excitement,[1]

[1] She had wandered from Bologna to Trieste, from Trieste to the Château de Haimbourg, and from there to the Château de Brünn.—Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires.*

she ended by contracting a nervous fever, which rapidly became serious, and from which she died on August 7th, 1820, at the Villa Vincentini, near Trieste, whither she had retired. She was forty-two years old. Near her, to close her eyes in death, were found her sister Caroline and her husband.

Poor Felix, or rather Paschal Baciocchi! With what good reason had his brother-in-law called him "*Ce bon et rebon Baciocchi*"! He seriously thought, this ideal husband, that because his wife was dead she had possessed all the virtues, and he desired to render her all the honours due to an exemplary conjugal fidelity.

"At San Petronio," says Mounier, "one of the chapels has been bought by that absurd Baciocchi, who has had it rebuilt and decorated at great expense in order to deposit there the ashes of his faithful wife. The inscription will be curious.

"The chapels of a church belong to the vestry, who sell them to noble families. These cause them to be ornamented, enclosed by a railing, called by their name, and they thus become veritable private possessions. Formerly the trade was a thriving one, but it has become less flourishing nowadays. Although Baciocchi is known to be very rich, he was only forced to pay for his in San Petronio about 3,000 francs."[1]

If this was the price of a chapel, there was no reason why M. Baciocchi should have paid a higher price, and on that account he is scarcely to be blamed. But wherein the poor man is to be censured is that he

[1] Extracts from the *Manuscrits inédits de Mounier*, published by M. le Comte d'Hérisson in the *Cabinet Noir*.

failed to comprehend his duty was to make himself forgotten as quickly as possible—it would have been the easiest of tasks!—and not to address letter after letter, as he had the bad taste to do, to persons in power, especially to M. Pozzo di Borgo, the greatest enemy Napoleon ever had. Such behaviour forces one to conclude that all the dignities with which he had been tricked out had caused him to forget his dignity as a man.

PAULINE BORGHESE

PRINCESS OF GUASTALLA

(1780–1825)



PRINCESS PAULINE BORGHESE

(After Lefèvre)

[By permission of M. Albin Michel, Paris]

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I

NO one could be droller and more amusing than was the Princess Borghese. Not that she was particularly witty, far from it! but there are some who are amusing from their total lack of wit, and it is rather to this category that the second sister of Napoleon belongs. She was only a little madcap, but a very droll and amusing one—except in the opinion of her husbands and her serious brother, the Emperor of the French, to whom her pranks on more than one occasion caused great annoyance. To draw her portrait is a task that requires a skill which her present biographer admits he is far from possessing, nevertheless some sort of idea of her character may be formed from the manner in which she conducted herself in the following incidents of her life.

If the behaviour of "Paulette" was extravagant, and it was exceedingly so, it is but fair to add that she was also exceedingly pretty. She must indeed have been that to have attracted attention, as she did, from the moment of her arrival at Marseilles. In this a little coquetry as well as beauty had its share. At that time she was as poor and as ill-clad as possible, but her youth and beauty flourished all the same

under a dress that proclaimed her poverty and a hat worth some four sous.

The little scatterbrain did not find it much to her taste to scrape the earthenware basin out of which the proscribed family ate, or to wash the dirty linen and sweep the humble lodging in which she lived on the top floor of an old house in the old quarter of Marseilles, between the Rue Vacon and the Cannebière. But to wrangle with her sisters, to play tricks on Marianne and enrage Annunziata, no doubt afforded her a little amusement; while it must have been still more exciting to stroll about the town, looking at the fine shops and the fine people and gossiping a little with her friends. For she was not long in making friends, and not insignificant ones either.

Two smart and distinguished young representatives of the people, the Citizens Barras and Fréron, had been sent as Commissioners of the Convention to Marseilles, where they had made the acquaintance of the brothers Bonaparte, who, as political refugees, were not the men to let any opportunity slip of improving their position. They, therefore, introduced the young Commissioners to their sisters, and it was through their recommendation that Madame Letizia obtained a pension. The fine fellows, perhaps, rather abused the situation and made the young Citizenesses Bonaparte more frequent visits than was altogether proper. But the latter, out of gratitude, were obliged to submit to their indiscretion, which they did without complaining and without the least unwillingness. The visits of the representatives of

the people were, moreover, anything but disinterested. The young and handsome Fréron was at once smitten with the truly remarkable face of Pauline and paid her assiduous court. It was wrong in Madame Letizia to tolerate this, but she belonged to the age of Louis XV., and the manners of that period were no better than those of the court and even of the family of the Grand Monarque, when, as Saint-Simon says in his Memoirs, "the Dauphiness [1] used to run about the garden at Marly with all the young people of the court till three or four in the morning."

The son of the celebrated critic and journalist, Fréron belonged to a good middle-class family, and was the godson of King Stanislas, two things of which he scarcely cared to boast at this time. He had also been a school-fellow and personal friend of Maximilian Robespierre, but of this fact he ceased to inform people after the 9th Thermidor. He had contributed with considerable zeal to the *Almanach des Muses;* then, becoming a journalist, he had started the *Orateur du Peuple,* which at once gave him a certain notoriety and later on sent him to the Convention. Young and good-looking, he had acquired a reputation as the handsomest of the beaux of the Revolution and the chief of the *jeunesse dorée.* His good manners and his smart clothes obtained him still more notoriety and more success than his articles in the *Orateur du Peuple,* or his speeches in the Convention. Nor were these attributes of his

[1] The beautiful and ill-fated Duchess of Burgundy, mother of Louis XV.

success without their effect on pretty Pauline Bonaparte.

Lucien saw with pleasure the attention his sister received from his friend Fréron, and his ambition leapt at the thought of seeing her married to the fascinating young Commissioner. In Lucien's modest circumstances, Fréron appeared an ideal, unhoped-for brother-in-law who could through his influence be useful to him personally. But while waiting for this happy *dénouement* there was no need for Lucien to help to hasten it; the romance required no intervention from without, and the psychological moment for asking her hand in marriage was not likely to be long delayed. For scandal had it that Pauline and Fréron were as good as married already![1]

But while these different interests were in suspense the beautiful Paulette had, possibly unknown to herself, though it is scarcely likely, made another conquest.

Owing to the influence of Fréron and Barras, her brother Napoleon, after the taking of Toulon, had been promoted from the rank of major to that of a general of brigade. The good relations that existed between the two members of the Convention and the Bonaparte family perhaps stood the young artillery officer in better stead than his innate genius for war. Immediately after his promotion General Bonaparte had taken as aide-de-camp young Junot, who had just been appointed an officer and whom he had remarked for his coolness and spirit at the siege of Toulon. Junot was pas-

[1] Barras, *Mémoires*.



STANISLAS FRÉRON

[*By permission of M. Albin Michel, Paris*]

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sionately devoted to his chief, and on accompanying him to Marseilles he had likewise fallen madly in love with Bonaparte's pretty sister, at whose feet he spent most of his time like a pet dog. Junot, indeed, began to love the entire family of her whom he adored, and his devotion to the General was at first slightly tinged with the love with which he was inspired by the seductive Paulette.

Junot, however, said nothing to him at Marseilles of his feelings, but it was not necessary for Bonaparte to have been gifted with much perspicacity to guess them. Besides, Junot was the last man in the world capable of hiding his feelings. But if the General had divined his aide-de-camp's secret he likewise said nothing, probably thinking that the flame was one which would soon be extinguished. On leaving Marseilles for Paris, whither he was accompanied by Junot, he had perhaps quite ceased to think of the matter, when strolling one evening in the Jardin des Plantes with his aide-de-camp the latter spoke.

It was the end of spring. The warm air, heavy with the perfume of limes and syringas, had something in it voluptuous and intoxicating which urged one to tender confidences. Junot could no longer contain himself; the balmy spring evening unloosened his tongue, and he confessed to Bonaparte that since the first day he had seen the lovely Pauline at Marseilles he had loved her. He added that though he no longer saw her he loved her each day the more, that he could neither eat nor drink, that he could no longer live in such a state, and he finished by formally demanding of Napoleon as head of the Bonaparte

family, in virtue of his position if not of his age, for the hand of his sister.

The General listened without interrupting, and neither refused nor accepted the offer, at the same time leaving it to be inferred that to start housekeeping and to provide for a family something more was necessary than the pay of a lieutenant.

"Paulette is not rich," he said, "and if she is to say 'yes,' it will first be necessary for the family to be assured that you can offer her such an establishment that any children she may have in the future shall not suffer."

Junot, who had already written his father to inform him of his matrimonial intentions, and to inquire how much he could give him on the day of his marriage, had just received a reply. It was not very encouraging. His father said that he could give him nothing at the moment, unless it was his blessing, but that on his death he might count on about 20,000 francs as his share.

Junot had this letter in his pocket, and he produced it, saying—

"You see that I shall be rich, since with my pay and my expectations I shall have an income of 1,200 francs. I implore you, General, to write to your mother, the Citizeness Bonaparte, and tell her that I love her daughter, that I ask for her hand in marriage, and that my father on his side will write and make the formal offer."

Bonaparte listened attentively to the proposal of his aide-de-camp as they returned to the centre of Paris. In the perfumed twilight of the Jardin

des Plantes he, too, had felt the effect of the soft spring atmosphere. Junot's confession had struck a sympathetic chord in him, and he had been on the point of lending a favourable ear to the honest aspirations of the young officer. But the more they became engulfed in the movement and noise of Paris he appeared to regret having almost suffered himself to be influenced by sentiment. The pavements of Paris put an end to romance and brought him back to cold reality. Instead of giving Junot a definite answer, as the latter expected, he held out to him hopes of the future.

"I cannot," he said, "write my mother and make her this request; for if later you have an income of 1,200 francs it will be all right; but you have not got it now. Your father is particularly healthy, and will keep you waiting for it a long time. In fine, you have nothing unless it be your lieutenant's epaulettes; while as for Pauline, she has not even as much. So then, as you have nothing and she has nothing, the total is nothing. You cannot therefore marry at present. Let us wait. Perhaps better days are in store for us, my friend; yes, they will come, even if I am compelled to seek them in another part of the world."

"But, General," pleaded Junot, "think of Paul and Virginia; in their case fortune was preferred to happiness, and what was the result?"

To argue, however, was useless; Bonaparte remained firm.[1]

In answering Junot as he did he was not insincere,

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*.

for he really thought seriously at this time of entering the Turkish service. But in the meanwhile the Revolution proceeded with giant strides, and finding its pace better suited to his size, small though it was, he decided that it was more profitable for him to struggle with fortune in Paris than at Constantinople.

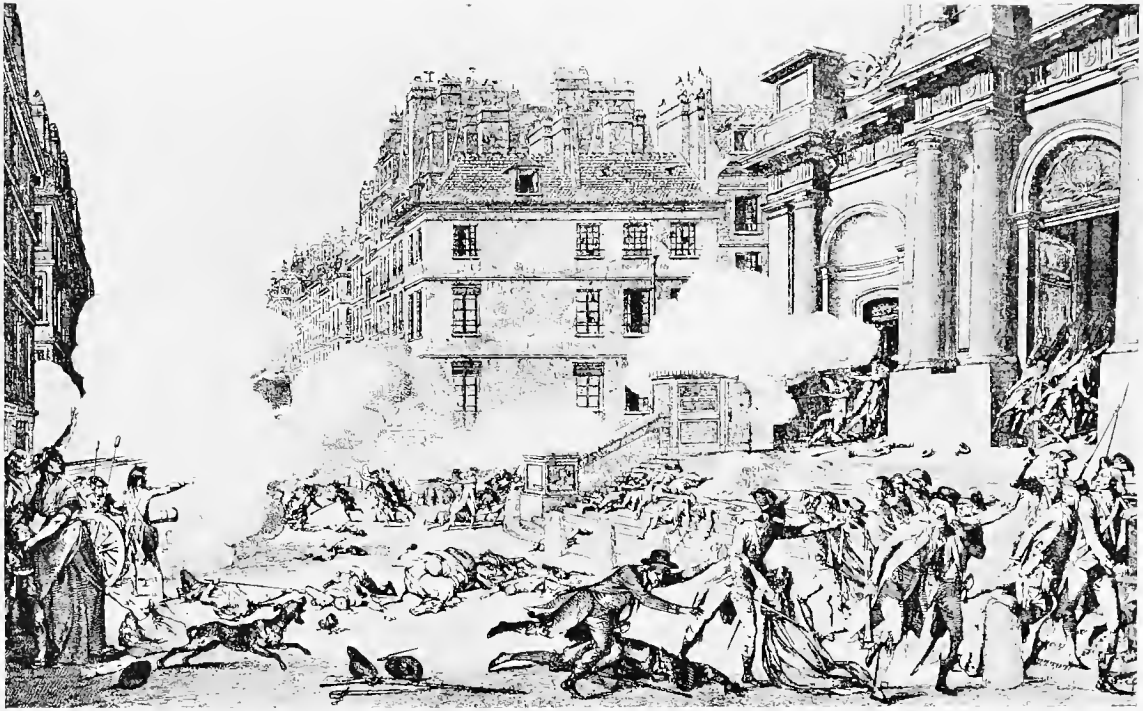
The same year, indeed, he was appointed a general of division, then second in command of the Army of the Interior under the immediate orders of Barras. It is well known what talent he displayed in suppressing the insurrection of the sections on the 13th Vendémiaire, as well as the affluence that his sudden rise brought his family. This rise also brought in its train many offers of marriage for his sisters.

"A citizen named Billon," wrote Napoleon to his brother Joseph, "who, I understand, is acquainted with you, wishes to marry Paulette. He has, however, no fortune, and I have written mamma that he is not worth considering. I shall try to find out more about him to-day. . . ."[1]

It would have been more logical, one would think, had he tried "to find out more about him" before writing that he "was not worth considering." But these words clearly show that ambition, natural and justifiable enough, had begun to count with the young general. When it was a question of the marriages of his sisters he was to prove himself a difficult person to please.

After the 13th Vendémiaire, when Bonaparte became Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior,

[1] *Correspondance de Napoléon.*



THE 13TH VENDÉMIAIRE AT ST. ROCH
NAPOLEON'S "WHIFF OF GRAPE-SHOT" WHICH PUT AN END TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
[*From a print of the period*]

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Fréron, as may be imagined, was by no means anxious to break with the beautiful Paulette. Now more than ever did he court the favour of Lucien, who was his chief supporter in the family. But luck had deserted *le beau* Fréron. He had not been re-elected to the Council of the Five Hundred. To console him, it is true, he was given the post of Commissary at Marseilles, whither he returned. But this was far from the brilliant position he had filled as member of the Convention. At Marseilles he was no longer of any consequence. Of what account is a mere government commissary compared with a popular journalist, an influential deputy, a dazzling dandy, the king of the *jeunesse dorée*, as he had been? So there was no more talk of poor little Fréron than of one who seeks employment instead of dispensing it. To comfort him and give him fresh courage he had need of all of Pauline's love.

Napoleon, however, whose ambition increased in proportion as one might have expected it to be satisfied, no longer appeared to regard this intimacy favourably. Fréron possessed no fortune, and the extravagant life he had led during the past few years had crippled him with debt. Bonaparte was aware of this. If he hesitated to give his sister to the brave Junot, who had in perspective an income of 1,200 francs, it was not in order that she might marry a man who had nothing but debts. Moreover, his ambition increasing on his own account increased also on that of his relations.

"I do not see," he replied to Joseph on January 11, 1796, *à propos* of a fresh offer of marriage Pauline

had received, "I do not see any objection to Paulette's marriage, *if he is rich. . . .*"

Fréron, it has been stated, was not rich, he had not been re-elected, and he only held a modest post. So Bonaparte no longer regarded him, from the matrimonial point of view, as favourably as he had done when he was a member of the Convention, and he, Napoleon, was a mere captain or commander of artillery.

But Pauline, who was still rather young to make all these nice calculations, gave a free rein to the passion with which the fascinating dandy had inspired her. An absolutely perfect intimacy existed between them, and it is curious to note with what complacency the undemonstrative Madame Letizia regarded the close relations the young people had formed. Nevertheless she does not seem to have desired a marriage between her daughter and Fréron.

"This alliance," says her biographer, "was in nowise pleasing to Madame Mère, who refused her consent in spite of her daughter's entreaties." [1]

The little romance proceeded all the same at a lively pace, and, to judge from the letters of the two lovers, the justification of their intimacy by marriage was absolutely desirable.

"Yesterday," wrote Pauline to Fréron, in February, 1796, "in the greatest uneasiness on account of your health, my dear friend, I sent . . . but too stupid for words, he returned without finding out how you were feeling. I was in this state when Nonat came.

[1] Baron Larrey, *Madame Mère*.

I was not expecting a letter from you; he told me that you had suffered a great deal. Then why did you write me? Since you disobey me you do not love me any more.

"I have not replied to your letter of the day before yesterday, because I wished to talk to you of it. My love is your surety for my answer. Yes, I swear to you, dear Stanislas, never to love any one but you. No one shares my heart; it is wholly yours. Who could offer opposition to the union of two souls who only seek happiness and find it in loving one another? No, my friend, neither mamma nor anybody can refuse you my hand.

"Nonat told me yesterday that you ought not to go out for a whole week. Well, we must be patient. We will write one another, and that will compensate us for the privation of not meeting. I thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending me your hair. I will likewise send you some of mine, but not like Laura. For Laura and Petrarch, whom you are always talking of, were not as happy as we are. Petrarch was constant, but Laura. . . . No, darling, Paulette will love you as much as Petrarch loved Laura. Adieu, Stanislas, dear friend, I embrace you as I love you." [1]

For a young girl of sixteen this was not so bad. They corresponded, they *tutoyèd*, they exchanged locks of hair, they embraced, in a word, they played Petrarch and Laura, and all under the complacent eye of the mother, who, while opposed to her

[1] From the Didot MSS., quoted by Th. Jung, in his scholarly work on *Bonaparte et son temps*.

daughter's marrying the young man, nevertheless permitted her to love him contrary to all the rules of propriety. What a strange family! More than once, too, Pauline went to consult a woman who had a high reputation in the silly art of fortune-telling to learn if her marriage would shortly take place.[1]

In the face of such proofs of her love, Fréron could hardly contain himself for joy. For, while loving Pauline, he was at the same time delighted to see, as a Thermidorian depreciated in value, that he would find in his future brother-in-law, the General, the assistance he needed to achieve success in the future. So in his love-dreams, happiness and ambition marched side by side. It was but natural. Was he not young? Had he not filled a high position? Did he not possess a certain ability or tact? And did he not wish to succeed? It was, then, natural enough that he should indulge himself in all the folly of dreams. So sure was he of the future—and after the letters he had received from Pauline he had the right to be—that everywhere he spoke of his marriage as very near. Nevertheless, at the same time he was not without a vague uneasiness; Madame Bonaparte raised difficulties, the General dissembled. In love as he was, he suffered much, and could have said with Tasso's "Aminta," since he composed madrigals in Italian with Paulette: "*Piccola si, ma fa pur gravi le ferite.*" ("She is small, but she inflicts cruel wounds.")

In his uncertainty, in his anxiety, he wrote on

[1] Général de Ricard, *Autour des Bonaparte.*

March 24, 1796, the following letter to General Bonaparte:—

"You promised me before leaving, my dear Bonaparte, a letter for your wife. We have decided that it will be better for you to inform her of my marriage so that she may not be astonished at the sudden apparition of Paulette when I present her to her. I am sending an orderly to you at Toulon to seek the letter of which I am to be the bearer.

"Your mother raises a slight obstacle to my haste. I am sticking to my intention of being married in Marseilles in four or five days, and all the arrangements have been made to this effect, independently of the possession of that hand I burn to unite to mine. It is probable that the Directory will appoint me immediately to some distant post, which will perhaps necessitate a speedy departure. If I were obliged to return here I should lose precious time, and the Government, which rightly bothers itself very little with affairs of the heart, might find fault at my absence, which would retard the object of the mission confided to me. So I implore you to write at once to your mother to remove every obstacle; tell her to leave me the greatest freedom in determining the date of my good fortune. I have the full consent of Paulette; why, then, postpone the fastening of those bonds that the most tender love has already formed? Dear Bonaparte, assist me to overcome this last obstacle. I count on you.

"I embrace you, dear friend, and I am yours and hers for life. Adieu."[1]

[1] Th. Jung, *Bonaparte et son temps*, and *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*.

This letter greatly annoyed Napoleon, who no longer wished to hear the subject of his sister's marriage to Fréron mentioned. He consequently wrote his mother that there could no longer be any question of its taking place. He also wrote to Joseph: "I beg of you to settle this affair of Paulette's. It is not my intention for her to marry Fréron. Tell her so and make her inform him." He wrote Lucien to the same effect, and perhaps also to Pauline herself.

Whilst this correspondence was taking place, the two lovers continued theirs and very likely saw one another. Pauline had actually packed her things and pretended she would get married in spite of the wishes of her family. On May 19, 1796, she wrote Fréron as follows :—

"I have just received your letter, which has given me the greatest pleasure, for I was commencing to complain to myself of your silence; besides, that woman [the fortune-teller?] has considerably upset me. But do not worry yourself, I am only ill of *ennui* and weariness. . . . Farewell, dear friend, I love you more than myself. Farewell.

"Tell Lucien to write to me; I have already written him twice. Excuse this scrawl, but in bed one cannot write decently."

It would seem that the obstacles to her marriage raised by her family rendered her, ordinarily so light-hearted and so giddily frivolous, melancholy, since she wrote Fréron that they took her into the country, where they did their best to provide amusement for her. But she would not yield without a

hard struggle. On July 10, 1796, she again wrote Fréron :—

"Dear friend, everybody unites to oppose us. I see by your letter that your friends are false, even including Napoleon's wife, whom you believed to be on your side. She has written her husband that I should demean myself if I married you, and that she hoped to prevent it. What have we done to her? Alas! everything is against us! How unhappy we are!

"I advise you to write to Napoleon. I would like to write him myself. What do you think of it? Address your letter to the care of mamma.

"Adieu, my friend, for life thy faithful lover.

"*Amami sempre, anima mia, mio bene, mio tenero amico, non respiro, se non pere ti amo.*"

Poor Paulette! There was no member of her family, even including her sister-in-law, who had entered the family against the wishes of all, who did not endeavour to prevent her marrying her dear Fréron. But she took good care not to forget this, and to the day of her divorce Josephine was to find in her an implacable enemy.

A few days later, on the 15th of July, she wrote again to Fréron :—

"You know my sensibility, and you are not ignorant how I idolise you. No, it is not possible that Paulette can live separated from her darling Stanislas!

"Formerly I had the sweet consolation of being able to talk to you and to unbosom myself to Elisa, but

this is now denied me. Lucien has shown me your letter; the situation, I see, continues the same. Ah, how I have kissed that letter! how I have pressed it against my bosom, against my heart! . . . We are leaving this house. I will send you the new address to-morrow.

"Farewell, dear friend. Write me often, and pour your heart into that of your tender and constant friend,

"P. B.

"*Ti amo sempre, e passionattissimamente, per sempre amo, sbell'idol mio, sei cuore mio, tenero amico, ti amo, amo, amo, amo, si amatissimo amante.*"

She loved him so much that, as she had told Fréron she would do, she wrote to her brother. But he had now become the glorious Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Italy and decidedly opposed her marriage, which he did in a manner that irrevocably put a stop to the subject. The disagreeable task of setting the seal to the last page of their romance devolved on Lucien. He wrote with much embarrassment to his friend Fréron on January 4, 1797, the following lines:—

" . . . My wife sends her regards to you, and mamma charges me to ask you to what address you wish her to return your correspondence. . . . This detail weighs upon me, my friend; let us have done with it.

"Adieu, dear Fréron; the torrent may bring us

together again. Whatever may be the whims of the blind goddess, it is sweet to count on a true friend. Count without reserve on your brother." [1]

The "torrent" did, in fact, a little later, bring Fréron and the beautiful Paulette together again, but it was on the ocean during the voyage to Haiti.

[1] This, as well as the previous letters, have been borrowed from the excellent work of Th. Jung, *Bonaparte et son temps.*

II

AFTER missing this marriage, Pauline had need of distraction. It was given her. The comfortable circumstances in which the family now found themselves assisted not a little to change her thoughts. The poverty of former years would have made her grief more bitter and prolonged it, for one must possess an exceptionally strong character to contend against these two evils united, and not to sink under them. But fortunately for Pauline, her material and pecuniary situation was no longer the same. With the good health she then enjoyed, with her youth and her natural light-heartedness, the inconsolable Paulette speedily found consolation. Moreover, the brilliant victories of her brother in Italy afforded diversion to her amorous regrets. In the family, as all over the world, nothing else was spoken of but his prodigious successes. And when General Bonaparte, taking advantage of a rather long armistice, invited his mother and sisters to pass some time with him at Milan, Pauline no longer gave a thought to anything but the pleasure of the journey to Italy, of seeing her glorious brother, who in her girlish imagination wore a crown of laurel on his

head, and of the desire with which she burned to see reflected on herself some rays of his glory, so resplendent that it already seemed to her like a family heritage of which she was about to obtain her lawful share.

Pauline arrived at Milan with her mother and her sister Annunziata (Caroline) before General Bonaparte had left that city to take up his headquarters at the Château de Monbello. M. and Madame Baciocchi, the Abbé Fesch (Madame Letizia's half-brother), Joseph and Louis had arrived previously. It was the first part of May, and spring, which in Italy is superb, seemed *en fête* to receive fittingly the family of the liberator of Italy. The Italians, with their exuberant and demonstrative temperament always enthusiastic, for their liberators or their oppressors, testified their joy in a manner that was almost delirious. There were illuminations, fireworks, cheers from the crowd of "*Evviva il liberatore dell'Italia!*" "*Evviva il General Buonaparte!*" It was more than enough to turn heads stronger than Pauline's, and hers, like her heart, had about as much steadiness as a weathercock. She had scarcely reached the frontier, or, rather, scarcely left Marseilles, before there was no more question of Fréron than if he had never existed. Is not this pretty much the case with all broken loves? At first it seems impossible that one should survive the rupture; there is a sort of bitter pleasure in telling oneself so; one hugs one's grief, so to speak. Then it fades away little by little, until nothing remains but the satisfaction of

having broken chains which at first it seemed one could never do without.

Bonaparte received his family with the tenderest affection. He presented to them his wife, than whom no one could have been more gracious. Misunderstandings and coldness disappeared, or seemed to disappear; they kissed one another and seemed to forget their grievances or, at least, agreed not to speak of them. This is what is called "to forgive and forget." Cordiality even would have reigned in the family if those two little pests, Caroline and Pauline, the latter especially, had not taken a wicked pleasure in doing all in their power to disturb it; and one knows what adepts women are at sowing discord in families.

Pauline was one *par excellence;* she seemed, moreover, to cherish a special grudge against her sister-in-law that she wished to satisfy. Though she had quite forgotten Fréron, she had not forgotten the part that Josephine had played in breaking off her marriage with him, and for this she did not forgive her. Josephine, however, had taken pleasure in preparing a charming apartment for her in the Serbelloni palace, where she resided at Milan; but nothing disarms feminine spite. Pauline merely wished to preserve the appearance of cordiality, but that was all.

Time passed quickly at Milan in a succession of *fêtes*, dinners, and receptions, and nearly every day excursions were made into the surrounding country, which was magnificent. At last, when the heat commenced to be disagreeable, they left Milan for the Château de Monbello, a few leagues east of

Verona. The poet Arnault, who was at this time at Bonaparte's headquarters at Monbello, has left this charming little sketch of the beautiful Pauline:—

"At dinner," he says, "I was placed next Paulette, who, remembering that she had met me at Marseilles, knowing me to be in possession of her secrets since I was the confidential friend of her future husband, treated me as an old acquaintance. She was a singular combination of the most perfect physical beauty and the most *bizarre* moral qualities. If she was the most lovely person one could possibly see, she was also the most unreasonable that one could imagine. She behaved like a schoolgirl, speaking at random, laughing at nothing and at everything, making fun of the most serious persons, putting out her tongue at her sister-in-law when she was not looking, nudging my knee when I did not pay sufficient attention to her pranks, and attracting to herself from time to time those terrible glances with which her brother called the most untractable men to order. But they made hardly any impression on her; the next moment she would begin again, and the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Italy fell to pieces before the giddiness of a little girl. Nevertheless, she was a good child by nature rather than from a desire to be such, for she had no principle and was capable of doing good merely from caprice."[1]

She was a veritable *enfant terrible*, going into the offices of the general staff, ransacking the papers, listening behind the doors to the conversation of

[1] Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire.*

the officers, often permitting herself to be surprised in this pretty occupation, but also on her side surprising others, particularly her sister-in-law, in matters which she never failed to turn to her own advantage.[1]

Bonaparte, therefore, desired to find a husband for Paulette.[2] Before he had been appointed to the command of the Army of Italy he had tried to make up a match between her and M. Permon. This project was most original. The young general offered himself to the widowed Madame Permon, at the same time suggesting to her that her son should marry Pauline and that her little daughter Laura, the future Madame Junot, should marry Louis or Jerome. But the descendant of the Comneni only laughed at this proposal, meant in all seriousness though it was, and nothing more came of it. It was at this moment that Bonaparte, who certainly liked widows, fell in love with Madame de Beauharnais, and she decided to accept him as her husband, for lack of a better, in February, 1796.

But to return to Pauline. Bonaparte made Joseph propose her to his aide-de-camp Marmont. This officer was very handsome, well born, and distinguished for his fine manners, his education, courage, and military ability. From every point of

[1] Comte d'Hérisson, *Le Cabinet Noir* (*extrait des Manuscrits de Mounier*).

[2] There is a book entitled *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*, in which there is a romantic version of Pauline's marriage to General Leclerc, but it is a tissue of lies and invention. A very slight knowledge of the period of the Consulate is sufficient to disprove it.

view he was a very desirable *parti*. But Marmont had strange ideas; he dreamt of domestic happiness, of love in marriage, of fidelity, and he divined that the beautiful Paulette would bring him just the opposite of all this. So while rendering justice to the grace and charms of Mademoiselle Bonaparte, and fully recognising the immense influence such a marriage would bring to bear on his future career, he would not let himself yield to the temptation. The behaviour of this spoilt child had caused him to reflect. So he declined, and although he did not find the happiness he dreamt of when later he married Mademoiselle Perregaux, the daughter of a rich banker in the Chaussée d'Antin, he never regretted having refused Pauline.

"I have more to congratulate myself upon than to repent of," he said, when writing his Memoirs.[1]

But General Leclerc had none of Marmont's apprehensions. He clearly foresaw that a marriage with the sister of his Commander-in-Chief would not injure his future; the young girl pleased him, and, in spite of reports to the contrary,[2] he proposed for and obtained the hand of Pauline in the most conventional fashion, without the least romance, but also, it is true, without the least delay. In regard to the haste with which Pauline's marriage took place, Arnault remarks, "She was more impatient to become Madame Leclerc than she was afterwards to become Princess Borghese."[3]

[1] Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires*.

[2] Comte d'Hérisson, *Le Cabinet Noir;* also *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*.

[3] Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire*.

Adjutant-General Leclerc was the son of a rich mill-owner at Pontoise. He had a brother and a sister. Their father had neglected nothing in order to give them a good education, from which they had sufficiently profited. Mademoiselle Leclerc married later Marshal Davoust; her brother was a Prefect under the Empire. As for the General, he had entered the service as a volunteer, and on October 19, 1791, had been appointed lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of Seine-et-Oise. A year afterwards he had become aide-de-camp to General Lapoype, and finally had been sent as Adjutant-General to the Army of Italy. He was at the time a young man of twenty-six, gentle and pleasant in appearance, of medium height and a rather delicate constitution. He affected a grave air, which, if it scarcely accorded with the youthfulness of his looks, was nevertheless well suited to the elevated rank he had so rapidly attained. With little money of his own, he was very ambitious, and it was to his marriage alone, says Marmont, that he owed his further rapid advancement in the future.

The marriage of Pauline Bonaparte to General Leclerc took place at Monbello. At first it was happy enough, though Fouché pretends that Pauline had for nobody so great an aversion as for Leclerc.[1] He did all that his wife desired, and this was no sinecure. Besides, he was very much in love. Pauline, to whom a husband was almost a novelty, and a very droll and amusing one at the start, had the goodness for a few days to suffer herself to be loved.

[1] Fouché, *Mémoires.*



GENERAL LECLERC
[*After Kinson*]

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"I found," to quote the poet Arnault again, "General Leclerc in his home intoxicated with happiness. Amorous and ambitious, there was reason for it. His wife seemed to me extremely happy also, not only because she was married to him, but also because she was married. Her new state had not given her as much gravity as her husband, who appeared more serious than ever. As for her, she was always the same giddy creature.

"'Is not that a diamond you have there?' she asked me, indicating a very modest one I wore in a pin. 'I think mine is still finer.' And she began to compare with some vanity the two stones, the finer of which was not bigger than a lentil.

"I have often laughed at the recollection of this childishness when I have seen her covered with diamonds, among which the finest of ours would not have been perceived. Her jewel-case has filled a bit since that day. . . ."[1]

If General Leclerc, as Arnault says, was more serious than ever after his marriage, it was because the various discoveries he made concerning his singular little wife were bound to suggest serious reflections as much as to the past as to the future. Marmont had made them beforehand, and had not married her. He must have congratulated himself more than once on his lucky escape.

As for Pauline, life opened intoxicatingly to her, and adorned with all possible happiness. Each day there were *fêtes*, parties, excursions, and these under the beautiful blue sky of Italy, of an Italy that her

[1] Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire*.

brother had just freed from the yoke of the Austrians after a series of victories beside which all the military glories hitherto known to history paled. And she was seventeen! And her husband, who was twenty-six, though somewhat serious, adored her! Was not all this more than sufficient to make one happy? How many women there are to whom but a single day of such an existence would have afforded happiness for the rest of their lives! But Pauline enjoyed it like a giddy little schoolgirl whose head has been turned, and was merely content to suffer herself to exist, to be spoilt in every possible way, and to be worshipped by everybody, even by her husband, without asking herself if she deserved her happiness, if it would last, or if she knew how to appreciate it at its just value.

In such a whirl of pleasure the time passed quickly. They sometimes spent several days at Milan; once they all went there together in a family party. On this occasion Madame Josephine Bonaparte and the beautiful Madame Leclerc decided to pay a visit to Colonel Junot, Bonaparte's aide-de-camp. This brave officer had received several rather serious wounds in one of the last engagements that had preceded the armistice. He was at Milan under the care of the surgeon Ivan, who answered for his recovery, but insisted upon absolute quiet for his patient. These ladies, then, paid him a visit, and Madame Bonaparte was accompanied by her maid Louise.

What is extraordinary in the visit of these three women is that Junot, two years before at Marseilles, had been madly in love with Pauline, who was just

married to another; that Josephine had tried to get up a flirtation with Junot, who travelled in the same carriage with her when she went from Paris to Milan to join her husband, but, faithful to the friendship and confidence his general reposed in him, Junot had had the impoliteness to repel these advances, though he did so as politely as possible. To effect this he decided to conceive a sudden passion for Madame Bonaparte's maid. This was to extricate himself from the situation with spirit and honour. For Louise, as this girl who was very attractive was called, combined with her duties as maid that of friend to her mistress, who had, in fact, the very singular fancy of making her dress like herself and of having her eat at her table. So Junot—though thoroughly flattered by the court that his general's wife paid him, but too honourable to yield to the caprices of this big doll who was as immoral as she was unscrupulous — had flirted desperately with Mademoiselle Louise, who was luckily at hand as a safety-valve to his twenty-six years, which it amused Josephine to set wildly on fire.

This triple visit must, then, have revived in the young colonel singularly complicated impressions; the pleasure, however, of receiving these ladies dominated every other feeling. He lay stretched on a couch, very pale from the terrible loss of blood that the Austrian sabres had caused, and wrapped in a sort of overcoat or dressing-gown of white *piqué*. They spoke of France, of Italy, of the beautiful women of Milan, of Madame Visconti, and of the

passion with which she had first inspired Major-General Berthier, of Madame Ruga, the beauty who was all the rage in Milan, whom Madame Leclerc herself found beautiful, but on condition she suppressed her moustache, "which, she declared, made her look like a drum-major." And she laughed, opening her mouth to show her pretty teeth, an advantage she never neglected to avail herself of, above all when near her sister-in-law, who had deplorable teeth and never permitted herself to smile save with closed lips. Junot, hearing them speak of the beautiful women of Milan, declared that the most beautiful ones were at that moment beside him. Madame Bonaparte and Madame Leclerc, who, newly married though they were, were not insensible to compliments, especially when they proceeded from other mouths than their husbands', did not attempt to conceal the pleasure the gallantry of the colonel afforded them. The time, therefore, passed very pleasantly for the wounded officer and his pretty guests, when all of a sudden Junot turned deadly white, his head fell back, and his eyes closed.

"Good heavens! Junot, what is the matter with you?" cried Madame Leclerc, rising.

Junot, who had not completely lost consciousness, extended to her his hand, which he had placed on his breast. At the same time a stream of blood ran from underneath his sleeve and covered Madame Leclerc's white dress. The unfortunate man, in the movements he had made to receive the ladies, had displaced the bandages which kept in place the dressing on one of the wounds on his arm; it had opened

afresh, and the blood flowed from his sleeve as if from a spout; at the same moment he fainted from weakness.

When he came to he found himself surrounded with the attentions of his three nurses. One poured water over his face from a full carafe, another held a flask tightly glued under his nose and prevented his breathing, while his orderly, having run in on hearing the screams of the ladies, had in the twinkling of an eye stripped him of his dressing-gown and put back in their proper place the dressing and necessary bandages. Junot, later, spoke of that moment as "the sweetest in his existence." [1]

As for Pauline, she had been alarmed at having blood on her dress, but after all it was not she who was wounded, and since she was a kind-hearted girl, her delight had been great when she saw this accident would have no serious result.

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

III

THE *fêtes* and other distractions did not prevent Madame Leclerc from keeping an eye on her sister-in-law Josephine. In spite of the delicate attentions the latter had showered upon her at the time of her arrival in Milan, on the occasion of her marriage, and many times besides, Pauline cordially detested her. Among the conversations of the officers of the staff she had managed to overhear when listening behind doors, were some that dealt with the more than questionable fidelity of Josephine Bonaparte to her husband.

Pauline, who was not easily shocked, had been very much so on hearing that her brother, the glorious conqueror of Beaulieu, of Würmser, of Alvinzi, was reduced by his wife, six years his senior, to the state of one of Molière's husbands. Naturally she could not pardon in her sister-in-law conduct which she herself was soon to imitate. Once married, she had nothing more pressing to do than to seek enlightenment through her husband as to the reports which had come to her ears. Leclerc did not hide from her that these reports had some foundation, that, in plain terms, Josephine had an "affair," the favourite for the moment being a certain Hippolyte



THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE
[*After Prud'hon*]

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Charles, lieutenant of dragoons, who had just been promoted captain, a good-looking, fastidious young fellow, who only opened his mouth to make puns, and played the buffoon in conversation. These rare qualities had stolen the heart of Josephine, who found her husband, notwithstanding what was said of his genius, a mere greenhorn beside M. Charles.

"Ah! but you know him," said Leclerc; "surely you know my aide-de-camp, Charles!"

"Yes, I know him quite well," said Pauline musingly.

She was not alone in her knowledge, which she had gathered from the gossip of officers; it was the common property of the whole Army of Italy. Only General Bonaparte, the husband, as is always the case, knew nothing of it, but he was not to remain long in ignorance. Perhaps it was entirely due to his eagle vision that he acquired the information, or possibly Pauline made it her duty to enlighten him, while giving herself at the same time the malicious pleasure of playing her sister-in-law a bad turn, and thus satisfying the hatred she bore her. Perhaps there was also in this denunciation another feeling, and a base one at that, a feeling of jealousy, which was on a par with the other two. What right had this Captain Charles to pay attention to any woman other than the wife of the general whose aide-de-camp he was?

Be this as it may, one fine day the rumour suddenly ran through the headquarters of the Army of Italy that the Commander-in-Chief had

caused Captain Charles to be arrested, and that the accusations which were brought against this officer were such that he was about to be shot.

General Bonaparte had become aware of the intimate relations existing between his wife and the handsome captain. But if these constituted a fault which a husband could not pardon (he did forgive it, however, and many similar offences), it was not one that came under the military code. This is doubtless just what he told himself, once his first fury had spent itself; for having weighed all considerations, he contented himself with chasing this too enterprising captain from the Army of Italy.

Josephine wept all her spare tears on this occasion, and it is well known she always possessed a goodly store. But Pauline, who had only attained her end very incompletely, gained nothing from her brother's mildness. She, "who, as one knows, was kindness itself," later told her friend Laura Permon, the future Madame Junot :—

"Fancy, Laurette, my sister-in-law very nearly died of grief, and it is certain one does not die of grief on parting with friends. There must on the face of it have been more than mere friendship in question. As for me, I consoled my brother, who was very unhappy." [1]

Bonaparte, who adored his wife with all the fire of his genius and his heart, must indeed have been unhappy, to find himself of all men betrayed with such effrontery.

But if Bonaparte, the husband, was deceived,

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

Charles, the lover, was too. "During his early campaigns in Italy," says Sismondi, "Bonaparte dismissed from his headquarters *various* lovers of Josephine."[1] Sismondi, at least, leaves it to be inferred that they were the successors and not the competitors of M. Charles, which, however, was not at all improbable.

As for this Captain Charles, when he became a civilian, Madame Bonaparte continued to extend him her protection, and a little later even continued to grant him her favours during Bonaparte's absence in Egypt. It was owing to her recommendation that he became connected with the provision business of Louis Bodin, and obtained an interest in the concern. From that day dates the fortune of M. Hippolyte Charles, who does not seem to have lost, pecuniarily speaking, through his change of career. If only General Bonaparte had known all this!

However, *fêtes*, love, jealousy, vengeance, everything afforded amusement to young Madame Leclerc. They made excursions in all directions, going even as far as the lakes. In short, time passed very gaily, when one day it was reported that General Bonaparte was about to sign with Austria that peace, since become famous under the name of Campo-Formio.

This was a new *fête* for Madame Leclerc. She would, then, soon be going to Paris! There more court than ever would be paid her; there she would be queen of all the balls, of every *salon*, for who could rival her in beauty? Her sister-in-law? She contemptuously laughed at the idea, calling Josephine

[1] Notes de Sismondi, *Revue historique*.

merely "a worn-out glove," and as she said it, she shrugged her shoulders with a little disdainful air of pity, so drolly mutinous as to compel one to laugh.

She was not, however, yet to be allowed to go to Paris. General Leclerc was ordered with his brigade, which formed part of the army of occupation in Italy, to remain behind in Milan. Furthermore, she was *enceinte*, and the state of her health demanded more care than could be obtained in a travelling carriage between Milan and Paris. She remained, therefore, a few more months in the Cisalpine capital. It was there her son was born, whom she named Dermide, after one of the characters in the poems of Ossian. It was his godfather, Bonaparte, who chose this strange name for him. La Revellière-Lépeaux did better than this, for he named his son Ossian. Bonaparte was at the time a great admirer of the plaintive and mystical hymns, albeit they sing of courage, of that Scotch bard, to whom, according to Sainte-Beuve, he attributed his genius, and whom, in return, one might add, he made rather famous. But these hymns had appeared more beautiful to him than they really were, because he had read them in the exaltation of his love to his wife Josephine. She, on the contrary, not sharing his fervour, must have found Ossian very boring, and her husband even more so, in making her listen to his reading.

The baptism of the little Dermide took place, without any parade, in a church belonging to the Capuchins, who had not taken the oath to the Constitution. The child was carried there one evening,

accompanied by Messieurs Dufresne and de Saint-Léon, who had been chosen as witnesses. The drawing-up of the birth certificate gave occasion for a ceremony, which was celebrated with great *éclat* in the governmental palace. All these matters had been regulated by General Bonaparte, who had sent a formal order from Paris to comply with his instructions. They took care not to disobey him, and everything was done as he had directed.

Shortly afterwards, as soon as Madame Leclerc had regained her strength, she went to Paris, where she took a house in the Rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, and began to cultivate the society of the Corsican colony, if not from choice—this colony, though formed of the richest families of the island, was not composed of millionaires—at least from necessity, for she had no other acquaintances in Paris. Among these various Corsican families, it was the house of Madame Permon that Pauline preferred the most to visit.

Madame Permon has obtained a niche in history without ever having done anything to deserve the honour. The widow of a man who had made a fortune in military supplies during the French expedition in aid of the revolted American colonies, she had a son who, during the Revolution, followed in the footsteps of his father and likewise enriched himself. He was a good son, and gave his mother all she desired, which enabled her to live in a certain style and to keep a very fair establishment. Born a Comnène and descended, as she and her daughter boasted, from the former Emperors of Constanti-

nople, she had known how with this key—which, however, people said was a false key—to open many doors, while her beauty had opened several others for her. Intriguing, not lacking in a certain push and tact, lively and fond of power, she had succeeded in creating a *salon*, but one met in it more men than women, and, as has been said of that of another woman, Madame de Beauharnais, more men than husbands. For the rest, she had a kind nature, and had known at Ajaccio Letizia Ramolino, the wife of M. Charles de Bonaparte. It was at her house at Montpellier, where her husband had purchased the post of Farmer-General, that Charles de Bonaparte had died. The Bonapartes did not forget the attention their father when dying had received from the Permons, nor the services they had rendered their family when reduced to poverty. It is, therefore, to her friendship with the Bonapartes that Madame Permon owes her place in history, and also as mother of her daughter Laura, who later married General Junot and wrote the celebrated memoirs which bear her name of Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Madame Leclerc went very often, nearly every day, to Madame Permon's, where she reigned as much by reason of her beauty as owing to the fame of her brother. It was there that she served her apprenticeship as woman of the world. She spared no pains in order to please ; she felt vaguely, instinctively, that it was necessary for the sisters of General Bonaparte to appear to advantage in the very few drawing-rooms to which they began to be admitted. But as woman of the world, she was far



LAURE JUNOT (*née* PERMON), DUCHESSE D'ABRANTÈS
[*From a lithograph by Gavarni*]

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too much of a spoiled child ever to become more than an apprentice, and not one of the best at that.

It was, also, in Madame Permon's *salon* that she began to lay the foundation of her reputation for beauty. To be beautiful was her sole ambition, and she was quite satisfied when she heard herself called the "Queen of Folly." As to her reputation as a good woman, that is a question which it would be impossible to treat seriously.

Madame Leclerc, then, went every day to visit her mother's old friend, Madame Permon, who loved her as much as if she had been her own child, and even more, for she excused in her a thousand follies which she would never have dreamt of overlooking in her daughter Laura. She would have spoiled her, if that had not already been done. It is difficult to credit the various caprices which at each moment of the day entered Paulette's pretty head; absurdities succeeded one another, each more senseless than the last, not only in words but in deeds. She was so pretty that one pardoned them in her; it was impossible to do otherwise. Everybody laughed—save General Leclerc, who no longer even smiled. His face, which became each day more serious, not to say sad, contrasted singularly with the frivolous and altogether droll face of his little imp of a wife. The poor man was hardly master in his own house. He had attempted to restrain her follies within reasonable bounds, but at the first advice he offered her, Madame Leclerc assumed a tone, and such a tone that the unfortunate general hastened to refrain

from speech and to resign himself to all the whims of his charming wife.

To employ an expression of Brantôme, which will not be out of place here since we are applying it to the wife of a cavalry general, Madame Leclerc was the leader of the squadron of the beautiful women of her time. She maintained the position for many years. Her beauty surpassed all that one can imagine, and suffered little change, in spite of the wear and tear due less to time than to dissipation and maladies, which it amused her to turn into serious illnesses, only to forget all about them on the day of a *fête* or a ball.

It has been said that it was impossible to form any idea of this woman, who was truly extraordinary as the perfection of beauty, because she was so little known in the "Tout Paris" of the period before her return from Haiti. She was then faded, washed out even, owing to the excess of pleasure, the devastating effects of a climate which swiftly uses up the most robust constitution, and perhaps, also, but this is infinitely less certain, through grief at her husband's death. She still possessed freshness, when she arrived in Paris from Milan, with her "Little Leclerc," as she called the general. But this freshness, as ephemeral as a rose, endured only a day. After Haiti, she was no longer the Paulette of Milan. A dull tone, resembling an antique cameo, had replaced that phosphorescence, that genius of beauty, which is only met with in the persons of certain privileged mortals—a phosphorescence and genius which intoxicate, possibly, even more those who possess them than those who admire them.

With all this, Madame Leclerc was frank and free and easy and companionable, at once ingenuous and thoroughly self-possessed; in short, the sort of woman men dearly love, but not women. Without any wit, she was no fool; she occasionally had inspirations in conversation, which came from no one knew where, and were altogether funny. At these times she would pronounce her words with a serious and convincing air, which rendered them even more amusing. For at the bottom, they possessed no meaning, and had no bearing on any subject—they had not even the merit of common sense. On the lips of any other woman they would have been mere folly; with her they were witty. But then she was so pretty!

Yes, she was pretty, but that was all. There was no question of refinement in her tastes, aspirations, or sentiments—"*point d'affaires*," as they said in the seventeenth century; of moral qualities, of virtue, there was still less question. She was able to say, with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, "Ah, *mon Dieu*, how natural passion is to me, and what a stranger I am to reason!" But passion, with her, was a passion to be beautiful; she loved only herself, nothing else. She had loved Fréron a little, but she was so young then! Perhaps she also loved her husband a little, but it was so little that it is not worth mentioning. He had, however, such a lovely uniform and such a handsome horse! What more did he require in order to be loved?

But of all the lovers she chose during her life, and they numbered quite a few, she chose none

because of love, but through mere idleness and caprice; she did not ask to be loved, but to be preferred. In her eyes, her lovers sanctioned and prolonged her reign and her reputation as a beauty. What a poor heart! What a true "*fin de siècle*" woman, as they used to say in 1799.

The life of a woman, so froth-like, could only be a tissue of every kind of extravagance. She made it so, in proportion to the increasing stability of the prodigious fortune of her brother. Chiffons held a larger share in her existence than anything else. Fashion is the one subject on which such foolish little heads are well informed. Madame Leclerc was quite at home here, and on this serious ground rivalled the folly of her frivolous sister-in-law, Josephine.

One day Madame Permon gave a ball in her pretty house in the Rue Sainte-Croix. She had invited all the friends she knew, and had even launched her invitations as far as the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Balls were so rare at this epoch that everybody came. Besides, it had been reported that the Bonaparte family would be present, and the Bonapartes had now become the magnet which drew people to all the evening parties where they were to be met. People, too, went no less to see the Bonapartes than to be seen by them. On this particular evening Madame Permon's *salon* was unusually well composed. One saw there M. de Trénis, that man of the world who made it his boast to be the best dancer of his time, and who introduced the "subscription dance"; M. Archambault

de Périgord, brother of the Bishop of Autun, the illustrious M. de Talleyrand; M. de Montbreton, the assiduous admirer at this period of the beauty of Madame Leclerc, whom later, on becoming Princess Borghese and Princess of Guastalla, she took as groom-in-waiting; M. de Montrond, a no less enthusiastic admirer of this sister of Napoleon, and whom she was later to enroll in the elegant battalion of her innumerable lovers; the Messieurs Juste and Charles de Noailles, M. Auguste de Montagu, M. de Rastignac, the Messieurs de l'Aigle, M. de Montcalm, the Aussons, M. de la Feuillade, M. de Mondenard, M. de Sainte-Aulaire, finally among the crumbs at the bottom of the basket the youth of Paris, that crowd of idlers who made it their sole occupation to pass all their evenings at balls and *fêtes*, and took good care never to exert themselves otherwise, under the pretext that their precious health was too delicate and that the least work might fatigue their august persons.

Madame Leclerc, who knew in advance from Madame Permon that she was about to receive in her house the *fine fleur* of the youthful aristocracy of Paris, prepared herself for this *soirée* as a general prepares for battle. She dreamt of it, and had a toilette made for it which, she said, should immortalise her. When she was asked what this toilette was to be, she would reply, "You will see it; I can say no more at present." Madame Germon, a veritable genius of a dressmaker, and Charbonnier, an astonishing artist in the hairdressing line, were obliged to promise on their oaths in no wise to

divulge the mysteries of her marvellous invention. The secret was well kept, even by Paulette. To avoid any possible crushing of her dress or coiffure in coming from the Rue Ville l'Évêque to the Rue Sainte-Croix, she asked permission of Madame Permon to have her costume carried direct to her house, together with everything else she needed, and to come there to dress. In this manner she would make an entry without the least danger of crushing her toilette.

The reception-rooms were comfortably filled when Madame Leclerc judged the proper moment had arrived to make her appearance. As she valued the success she owed to her beauty, her heart should have expanded under the general murmur of admiration that greeted her dazzling vision, as a rose expands under the kisses of the June sun. She was indeed ravishing. But what eccentricity! Fillets of a very soft fur, spotted like a leopard, were wound round her head, while in her hair and on the fillets were little grapes of gold, without, however, causing her head to appear over-dressed. She had copied the head-dress of a Bacchante in the Louvre. The classical beauty of her face, which breathed youth, sufficiently well sustained the mythological impression, which her dress completed. This was of the finest Indian muslin. The hem was bordered with gold embroidery, four or five inches broad, representing a garland of vine-leaves. A Greek tunic moulded itself in a marvellous manner to her graceful figure, and vine-leaves, artistically arranged, set off, without creating any

sense of heaviness, this singular costume. She wore clasps of cameos on her shoulders, on her hips, and on her bosom. There were cameos, too, on her sleeves, which were short and loose. Beneath her breasts, white as alabaster, and looking like twin doves ready for flight, was a girdle, a band of burnished gold clasped by a superb stone cut in the antique fashion. She carried her gloves in her hands, which were white and shapely enough to do without them. For the rest, a little air of child-like astonishment and her bosom palpitating beneath the muslin made her strikingly resemble, but for her expression, the picture of the "Young Girl with the Broken Pitcher," by Greuze.

Never did a woman produce a greater sensation upon entering a *salon*. The admiration she excited was enthusiastic and quite spontaneous. Beauty has so wide an empire that prejudices and political hatreds suddenly effaced themselves, and ardent Royalists were seen to applaud the sister of him who had caused so many of their party to be shot on the 13th Vendémiaire. The women, however, were by no means disarmed. The beauty of Pauline created the same impression on them as it did on the men, and their silence eloquently attested the fact. But they at once set themselves to search out something to criticise in the toilette of Madame Leclerc. Unable to discover anything, they began to attack the woman, but her beauty was unassailable. This, however, did not hinder them from making unkind remarks. Was

she not ashamed, little *parvenue* that she was, who, two or three years back, had not a morsel of bread to put between her teeth, and lived on the charity of the municipality at Marseilles, was she not ashamed to come now and seek to blot out everybody with her brazen luxury? Of a truth there were women who possessed no moral sense! . . . And once started on this subject, and several others, the good tongues wagged on without ceasing. They were obliged, however, to stop in the long run, for Madame Permon, finding their venomous remarks were being expressed too loud, and fearing they might reach the ears of her darling Paulette, was obliged to use her authority as mistress of the house, and silence the malignant jealousy of her guests. What a singular thing it is that women are not willing to permit one of their sex to exceed all others in beauty!

Among the crowd of envious beholders Madame de Contades, at the moment Madame Leclerc made her sensational appearance, had about her a circle of admirers. As the result of the little revolution effected by the beauty of Pauline, she too looked about her, but in vain, for some one to whom she might give vent to her spite. But her circle of admirers had all suddenly vanished and gone to swell the ranks of Paulette's courtiers. This gave Madame de Contades a fresh grievance against Pauline, and she swore to have her revenge.

"Give me your arm," she said to one of her cavaliers, who had so cavalierly left her, and who happened just then to pass by her.

And on this arm, which she had gained no less

cavalierly, she crossed the *salon* and arrived near Madame Leclerc.

The beautiful young woman, who had found the heat too great and was slightly fatigued with dancing, but who in reality preferred to be in another room in order to be admired in comfort, had withdrawn to Madame Permon's charmingly furnished boudoir, which adjoined the *salon.* It was a more suitable frame for her beauty than the bustling ball-room. She had installed herself on a sofa in a manner to display to the best advantage her personal charms and her toilette. She was near the fireplace, and the lights in the candelabra lit her up in such a way that one would have sworn it was her face beaming with beauty and happiness that illumined the whole apartment.

Meanwhile, Madame de Contades approached on the arm of her cavalier, and no sooner entered the boudoir than she proceeded to stare through her lorgnette, in that impertinent little way women have when they wish to be rude, at the beautiful Bacchante of the golden vine-leaves and the antique cameos.

Calm in her triumph, Pauline, who felt happy and took pleasure in her enjoyment, was well disposed towards everybody rather than otherwise, when she suddenly heard Madame de Contades, whom she had supposed in all good faith to be admiring her, utter these venomous words:—

"*Mon Dieu,* what a misfortune! Oh, what a pity! She would be so pretty but for that!"

"But for what?" asked her cavalier.

"What! Do you mean to say you do not see? Why, it stares you in the face!"

It was more truly Madame de Contades who was bursting with jealousy; but on hearing her make this declaration of war in a loud voice, everybody turned to gaze on poor Madame Leclerc. She, under the cross-fire of so many glances, not all of which were kindly disposed, thought there must be something out of place in her coiffure, and seeing the insistency of those who stared at her, she began to redden and suffocate as if she had been detected in some crime.

"But do you not see what I mean?" persisted Madame de Contades, with the cold cruelty of a jealous woman. "What a pity! Yes, truly, how unfortunate! Such a really pretty head to have such ears! If I had ears like those I would have them cut off. Yes, positively, they are like those of a pug-dog. You who know her, Monsieur, advise her to have it done; it would be a charitable act on your part."

It was certainly not one on hers to cause words to be overheard—for she had managed to speak quite loud enough to enable all to have the benefit of her remarks—which were directed with such cruel malignity against a young woman who, when all was said, had done nothing to harm her, and was only guilty of being beautiful, and whom there was no sense in reproaching because she had been born more lovely than Madame de Contades.

The poor creature, blushing in a manner that made her lovelier than ever, rose as if to depart, but tears blinded her eyes, her strength deserted her, and

she sank back on her sofa, hiding her face in her hands, and ill in good earnest!

Madame Leclerc's ears were by no means so extraordinary as it had pleased the unpleasant Madame de Contades to proclaim. They were simply too flat, and not chiselled into those little folds that make the ears of certain women so marvellously ravishing, veritable objects of art to be placed under glass. But there was nothing in this on which to base an attack. It was not a failing, if that was all one could charge Pauline with. But, as always happens, when one discovers a fault in a masterpiece, one can see nothing else after the discovery. So they no longer contemplated the beauty of Madame Leclerc, but only stared at her ears.

To the shame of human nature it must be owned that the triumph achieved by Madame de Contades through her unkindness was perhaps greater than that won by Madame Leclerc by her beauty. But such gratuitous cruelty so much impressed poor Pauline that after that evening party she almost always dressed her hair so as to conceal the flatness of her ears beneath her hair, or under a sort of bandeau, or *mentonnière*, as may be seen in her portrait by R. Lefèvre, which is in the Museum at Versailles.

IV

DURING the winter of 1800 Portugal, supported by England, declared war on Spain. As Spain was on good terms with France, the First Consul determined to come to her aid. Accordingly he sent a little army of fifteen thousand men to Spain. General Bernadotte was originally chosen to command it, but Napoleon changed his mind and gave the command to General Leclerc.

Finding himself commander-in-chief, he believed that he had as much genius as his brother-in-law, and was even foolish enough to try to resemble him. He was about the same height and equally thin; he imitated his bluntness of speech, copied his attitudes, his gestures, his manners. He even went to the length of wearing over his uniform a grey *redingote* and a hat like Bonaparte's. But he only succeeded in making himself a caricature of his brother-in-law; and the soldiers, quick to detect his ridiculous pretension, nicknamed him "The blond Bonaparte."

The army, moreover, was not pleased that the command of the expedition to Portugal should have been given to a man whose only claim to it was that he had married the sister of the First Consul, when there were so many able and distinguished generals

out of employment. Leclerc, too, did not seek to justify the preference shown him. Always short of money, he borrowed from his brother-in-law, Lucien Bonaparte, then Ambassador at Madrid, but since he could not be continually borrowing he did a little trade in contraband, from which he derived a great deal of money but small consideration.[1]

He, finally, incurred the hatred of the army by the most atrocious crime; for, displeased that Brigadier General Thiébault should have acquitted two soldiers arraigned on a false charge and whom he wished shot all the same "as an example," he said, he caused a soldier of Thiébault's brigade to be arrested and shot immediately. He thus took his revenge by an assassination. This act would be incredible if it were not vouched for by Thiébault himself, who was as reliable as he was brave.

On his return from Portugal, General Leclerc was soon the recipient of a fresh favour as a reward for his *services* during his first command. Bonaparte was organising an expedition to re-conquer the colony of Haiti (or San Domingo as this island was then still commonly called), of which the slaves, who had revolted in 1792, had ever since been the masters. He took the precaution to gain the consent of England, with whom peace had not yet been concluded, before embarking on this expedition. When the necessary naval and military forces were concentrated at Lorient and Brest, Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse was given the command of the fleet and General Leclerc was appointed commander-in-chief of the whole expedition.

[1] Général Thiébault, *Mémoires;* Constant, *Mémoires.*

Whilst the troops were preparing for their departure, the First Consul had told his sister that she must accompany her husband to Haiti. This was opposed to the wishes of both. "I believe," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "that General Leclerc would very willingly have dispensed with this addition to his baggage, for it was a real calamity, after having exhausted the pleasure of regarding her for a quarter of an hour, to have the terrible burden of continually amusing, occupying, and looking after Madame Leclerc." [1]

But the First Consul deemed the departure of his sister necessary to put a stop to the scandal caused by certain excesses in which Madame Leclerc was indulging, and to which Madame de Rémusat alludes without specifying them.[2]

Before leaving Paris, Madame Leclerc paid several visits. She was with her friend Madame Junot more than ever, and her *bizarre*, fantastic character allowed itself full play. At one time she would appear enchanted at the idea of taking part with her "little Leclerc," as she called him, in an expedition which promised so many wonderful adventures, in which she intended to amuse herself enormously. At another time she would be overwhelmed with despair at the bare thought of her departure.

"How bored I shall be down there, alone with my husband!" she would exclaim. "I cannot bring myself to leave Paris; no, indeed, it is only in Paris that I can live. I cannot understand how

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*.
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

my brother can expect a wife to go with her husband! It is ridiculous to the last degree! What difference can it make if I stay and amuse myself in Paris instead of going and boring myself in the society of the General in that barbarous country? Oh, I shall die if I go, I am certain of it! Besides, I am already ill."

And then she would bemoan her unhappy lot, and shed tears over her death as if it were about to occur. She was so overcome at the thought of dying, that she excited the pity of Madame Junot.

"Don't give way like this," said her friend to her one day; "you are making yourself utterly miserable. Just think, you are going to a country where you will be queen. Slaves will carry you in a palanquin, beautiful negresses will cradle you in a hammock, under the finest trees in the world, and fan you with immense fans of feathers. It will be an enchanted existence!"

"But the savages? the serpents?"

"Savages! there are no longer any; and besides, you will be surrounded by a whole army of brave men. As for serpents, how could a single one reach Haiti, since it is an island?"

"That is true; you reassure me. Well, I must go and prepare my dresses to turn the heads of the monkeys of the country. Tell me, shall I be sufficiently pretty, do you think, for them, if I wear a Madras handkerchief on my head *à la créole?*"

Her friend ordered a Madras handkerchief to be brought, and bound the charming head of Madame Leclerc in its gaudy-coloured folds.

"Yes," she said, "that is not so bad. Oh, I have an idea, Laurette; will you come with me to Haiti? We will give dances, and have parties in the mountains and on the sea; it would be delightful!"

But Madame Junot gently reminded her that she was *enceinte.*

"Ah, true," replied Pauline, "I had not thought of that."

And at the thought of going to Haiti without her friend the tears began to flow again. A moment later all was forgotten.[1]

Madame Leclerc amused herself in preparing for her voyage as if the day of departure would never arrive. She accumulated mountains of costumes, pyramids of hats, piles of useless articles of all descriptions, till it seemed as if it would be impossible to find room in the whole fleet for her luggage. General Leclerc was staggered at the idea of such a convoy, and suggested it should be reduced.

"Then I remain, as I should like to," replied his charming wife; and the General was obliged to yield.

As long as she was at Paris, and afterwards at Brest, everything went well. The preparations and the thought of the voyage distracted her. But when it came to the point of embarking on the *Océan,* which was to carry her to Haiti, it was quite another matter. She wept, she implored, she swore that she would never put her foot on board. . . . However, Fréron, her former lover, was going in the same ship.[2]

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

[2] "Par une malicieuse intention de son puissant frère elle



AN EPISODE DURING THE ATTEMPT OF THE FRENCH
TO RECONQUER HAITI
[*From an old print*]

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But even this did not comfort her; she did not wish to go further than Brest. As there were no palanquins at Brest, she was put in a carriage and driven to the jetty, where she was deposited by two stalwart sailors in the Admiral's launch, and conducted without further delay on board the *Océan*. Her son, little Dermide, went with her. The fleet then weighed anchor, the ships defiled majestically, with all sails set, out of the harbour of Brest, and rapidly vanished beyond the misty horizon.

General Leclerc was not the man to direct so important an expedition, and moreover he knew nothing of colonial affairs. The indecision of his character and his cautious, improvident administration were in a great part the causes of the failure of the campaign and the almost complete loss of the army. On his arrival, he established his headquarters at Cap Haitien. The blacks had set fire to it while the French troops were landing, but the sailors of the fleet succeeded in arresting the progress of the fire before the town had been totally destroyed. Later General Leclerc moved with his wife and staff to Tortuga, a small island on the Haitian coast, which was safe from the sudden fanatical attacks of the blacks as well as being an agreeable and healthy spot. In this latter respect unfortunately the same could not be said of the main island. Malaria, yellow fever, cholera, the murder of sentinels, and the massacre of

avait fait cette longue traversée en compagnie de son ex-Roméo, le beau Fréron" (Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires*).

isolated detachments decimated the troops, whose courage was undaunted by misfortune, and rapidly placed the expedition in the most awkward situation, to which the incapacity of the commander-in-chief also contributed its share. By degrees the army was obliged to put itself on the defensive. Cap Haitien was besieged. Leclerc, who had returned there with his wife and child in the hope of repairing the blunders he had made, realising the heavy responsibility that rested on him, commenced to fail in health. All this no doubt prevented him from observing the follies to which his wife abandoned herself in Haiti as she had done in Paris.

Detailed information as to Madame Leclerc's eccentricities in Haiti is lacking, but it is known that she pursued pleasure furiously. The Chancellor Pasquier, a man not given to levity, says that "the tropical sun was astonished at the ardour of her pleasures."[1] It seems, however, that Madame Leclerc displayed at a certain critical juncture extraordinary coolness, which might, perhaps, likewise have astonished the same sun. Constant, the first valet of Napoleon, relates in his Memoirs with what *sang-froid* Madame Leclerc behaved during the war in Haiti. He obtained his information, he says, from one who was in her service at the time. It is not, however, altogether to be trusted, for in the imperial *entourage* one was ever too ready to credit all the members of Napoleon's family with qualities and merits that they hardly if at all possessed. As it was impossible to eulogise Madame Leclerc's private life,

[1] Chancelier Pasquier, *Mémoires.*

while tributes to her beauty had from their frequency become banal, people hoped, no doubt, to flatter Napoleon by relating how heroically his sister, the frivolous Pauline, had behaved. Otherwise, her heroism seems scarcely credible. The following is what was related of it.

About the end of October, 1802, General Leclerc, after having evacuated in succession Fort Dauphin and Port de Paix, withdrew to the north of the island and occupied Cap Haitien. His blunders had now made him ill, and the insurgents, notified by their spies of his illness, wished to profit by this circumstance to attack the whites. On the 28th, Christophe, Clervaux, and Dessalines, at the head of more than twelve thousand blacks, laid siege to Cap Haitien. Before this horde, the French, reduced to about a thousand men, abandoned the advance posts and the surrounding heights, and shut themselves up in the town. The blacks assaulted it vigorously, and were repulsed no less vigorously, with the morose fury of despair. Each knew that in the event of the capture of the town the blacks would give no quarter to the whites. It was an atrocious struggle, a struggle to the death. General Leclerc, although very ill, directed the defence in person. During this time Madame Leclerc and little Dermide were in the house which the commander-in-chief had chosen as his headquarters. To protect her she had a devoted friend and a half-company of artillery. The house was situated at the foot of the hills that fringed the coast, but fearing lest the blacks should press the attack at this point and not feeling at all confident as

to the definite issue of the struggle, Leclerc sent by an aide-de-camp an order to his wife to withdraw with her son on board one of the ships of the fleet. Pauline, however, replied that she preferred to remain in the house. The ladies of the town, who, to keep up one another's courage, had gathered around her in this critical situation, implored her to obey her husband's order.

"You can go if you like," she said; "you are not the sister of Bonaparte."

General Leclerc, on being informed of her decision, sent the aide-de-camp again to his wife with the order to tie her into a chair if necessary, for on board he was determined she should go, either of her own accord or by force. Pauline, persisting in her refusal to quit the house, was consequently tied fast to a chair as her husband had ordered, and conducted, under an escort of artillerymen, to the pier, where a boat was waiting to take her on board. A soldier, carrying Dermide in his arms, walked at her side, while the women of the town followed, to seek also a refuge on the French ships. But on arriving at the pier an aide-de-camp came to announce the end of the battle and the flight of the blacks.

"Now you see," said Pauline, "whether I was right or not in refusing to inconvenience myself."

Seeing the last assault repulsed and the enemy routed, Leclerc collapsed. He died of cholera a few nights later, on November 1, 1802.

Madame Leclerc was capable of any and every whim. In these trying circumstances she proved herself a devoted wife, and during the short illness of

her husband she did not leave his bed, nursing him, in spite of the danger of infection, with tender care.

She also was ill; not from cholera—but the zest with which she had pursued pleasure since her arrival in Haiti. She returned to France with her little son, Dermide, on the *Swiftsure*, taking with her the body of her unfortunate husband. After his death she displayed her devotion to him—which, hitherto, unless it was during the last three days of his life, he had never experienced—by placing him in a superb coffin of cedar-wood. Further, finding that her hair was falling from ill-health and being advised by the doctors to cut it, she did so, declaring with a sigh that "she offered it as a sacrifice to the shade of the dead."

Pauline, whom flattery at this time compared to Artemis, arrived at Toulon in the month of January, 1803, and went immediately to Paris, where she made a theatrical display of her grief. Fouché declares that she was overjoyed to find herself free. It is not unlikely, but if she rejoiced she did not forget she was ill. Madame de Rémusat asserts that she was "ever after subject to attacks of the malady with which she was at this time first afflicted." [1] And Madame d'Abrantès says "that she had for some time a sore in her hand, which to the despair of the doctors was no sooner cured than it reappeared." [2]

Fouché is a little more explicit on the subject of this mysterious illness. He says it was the result of dissipation, and that "she had recourse to all the

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

treasures of Esculapius before she was cured." "A remarkable thing," he adds, "about this wonderful cure was that her beauty, far from being impaired, was more brilliant than ever, like that of those curious flowers that require to be fertilised before they open." [1] The praise that Fouché bestowed on her beauty was echoed by Madame de Rémusat, who declared that "although ailing and dressed in deepest mourning, Madame Leclerc seemed to me the most charming person I had ever seen." [2]

[1] Fouché, *Mémoires.*
[2] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

V

ON her return to Paris the First Consul insisted that she should give him her word of honour as a guarantee of her future good behaviour. To please him she gave it to him, without any intention of being bound by it. But Bonaparte, who had very limited faith in his sister's promises, knowing that neither marriage nor widowhood had sobered her, commissioned his brother Joseph and his wife, Julie, to watch her conduct. He wished her period of mourning to be passed in the conventional fashion, resolving to find another husband for her as soon as it was over. Madame Leclerc, accordingly, took up her abode with Joseph in the splendid Hôtel Marbœuf in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which was later given as a wedding present to the wife of Marshal Suchet.

The body of General Leclerc was buried in the Panthéon, in state, like that of a commander-in-chief who had been killed in action.

The death of his brother-in-law gave rise to a little incident that, to close observers, indicated the monarchical tendency which was becoming more and more marked in the daily habits of the first magistrate of the Republic. General Bonaparte had naturally

gone into mourning for Leclerc, and as a mark of respect his household, from the palace officials and attendants on Madame Bonaparte down to the grooms and scullery-maids, had followed his example. This was quite natural, but it was remarked the diplomatic corps also wore black when they paid their official visits of condolence to the First Consul and his wife. This was due to a suggestion that had been previously circulated, to the effect that it would be etiquette to wear black; and as the ambassadors had no time to refer the matter to their courts, this opinion had prevailed, and the ambassadors paid their visits in state. They could not have done more had he been a sovereign.

Madame Leclerc, however, was soon bored to death. Incapable of finding any occupation, never opening a book, never singing or playing, and as little able to use a pencil or a pen as she was to use a needle, it seemed to her that the days were endless.

"Oh," she would sigh a hundred times a day, "I am so bored that I shall die; and if my brother continues to prevent me from seeing people I shall kill myself!"

In the meantime, while waiting to put this threat into execution, she sought to kill time, and when the weather was fine she had herself carried about in a litter, as the means of taking the air best suited to her delicate health. She would, too, frequently interpret the promise she had made her brother in a very liberal sense, and receive visitors. There was no great harm in this, and those who visited her at first were only old friends, the Permons, General and

Madame Junot, and some others. She soon, however, took advantage of their coming to invite others. One in particular, whom she sent for more than once, was a fortune-teller, whom she had formerly consulted in Marseilles, where she was celebrated in the days when General Bonaparte was not. She had a weakness, in common with her sister-in-law, Josephine, for consulting prophetesses, sorcerers, and other persons of the same stamp, and like Josephine, too, she believed in their predictions more than she believed in God.

Nothing was more grotesque than to see this fortune-teller solemnly seated at a table in a superb boudoir filled with the choicest works of art, while the beautiful widow contemplated her with the closest attention. "She was a little woman, with a wrinkled face and meanly clad, but not lacking in cunning, and her eyes, though very small, were piercing." [1]

What the fortune-teller predicted is not known, but there is considerable information as to what Pauline did, in spite of the orders of the First Consul and the surveillance under which she lived while at her brother Joseph's. This princess, "a glutton in pleasure," to employ a phrase of Madame de Motteville, sought consolation, or rather distraction, and her amusements were not of the sort that conform either with morality or conventionality. Her conduct was light to a degree. She had several *liaisons*, which she did not attempt to hide, one especially, that was the talk of Paris, being with Lafon, an actor of the Théâtre Français. Her fancy for this comedian had begun before her departure for

[1] Général de Ricard, *Autour des Bonaparte.*

Haiti, and was, perhaps, its cause. The First Consul had found it an excellent opportunity to nip this *liaison* in the bud. But the voyage to Haiti was only an *entr'acte;* on her return Pauline recommenced her little comedy with the comedian. From all accounts Lafon was madly in love with her. When it was reported at the Théâtre Français that Madame Leclerc would accompany her husband on the distant expedition he was to command, Mademoiselle Duchesnois exclaimed, "Lafon will never get over it; it is certain to kill him!"

The fresh gallantries of the incorrigible Pauline soon reached the ears of Napoleon. He was very annoyed, but he could do nothing. To shut her up in a convent was out of the question. A husband, however, he thought might keep her quiet.

Pauline had at this time taken a fancy to Prince Camille Borghese, who had recently arrived in Paris from Rome. The fact, however, that he possessed an income of two million francs, joined to looks of a type scarcely likely to attract Pauline, would lead one to suppose that there was more calculation than love in her fancy for Prince Borghese. At any rate, the *liaison* had hardly become public before the First Consul interfered and resolved to render it respectable by marriage. The prince was induced to believe he was in love with Pauline, and consented to marry her. Both acted foolishly in this matter, but did so with their eyes open.

Camille Borghese was a Roman prince, who had served in the ranks of the French army during its first campaign in Italy. Although he belonged to



PRINCE CAMILLE BORGHESE

[*By permission of M. Albin Michel, Paris*]

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one of the most distinguished and richest families in Rome, although he was the great-nephew of the Pope Paul V., he had been, says Méneval, one of the first in Italy to accept the principles of the French Revolution. For this he was much praised in France, but when one knows his motive, the praise was scarcely deserved. For Camille Borghese had a brother, Prince Aldobrandini, and in order to save the immense fortune of the family during the events that were revolutionising Italy, one of the brothers joined the French party and the other the Papal. Thus in the event of the success of the French the fact that one of the brothers could prove he belonged to the patriotic party would cause the Borghese estates to be respected, while in case of defeat he who belonged to the Papal party would likewise serve to protect them.

Prince Borghese was not altogether devoid of good looks; with his black whiskers and curly hair he had a certain air of distinction, spoilt, however, by the grotesque manner in which he carried himself, that made him look like a clown dressed *à la mode*. On coming to Paris he lived in the same splendid and luxurious state as that to which he had been accustomed in Rome. The Hôtel d'Ogny that he rented in the Rue Grande-Batelière was superb. He loved horses, and his equipages were soon cited as the equal of those of Prince de Fuentès-Pignatelli and Prince Demidof, who at that time were the standard by which Paris judged smartness. But if no one could drive a coach and four better than he, no one was less able to carry on a conversation. An excellent coach-

man, a perfect horseman, he was nothing out of a saddle or off the box-seat of a carriage.

His intelligence, moreover, was limited, though he possessed enough to prove his mediocrity. As a boy his education had been neglected, and he had picked up all he knew as he best could, for his father was of the opinion that his children would always know enough for the subjects of the Pope. When he arrived in Paris, finding the conversation of his *concierge*, whom he thought *distingué*, suited to his taste, he passed his evenings with him and his wife. But with his name and his fortune he soon received invitations and made friends. He was in demand everywhere, and acquired a reputation as a good dancer and a good fellow. In a word, he was as good-natured as he was stupid.

Marriage between such a man and Pauline would be incomprehensible if vanity had not been the motive of both. She wished to be a princess, and the prince was flattered at the idea of becoming brother-in-law of the First Consul of the Republic. It was, too, a step in the direction of monarchy, and this union insensibly prepared opinion. If Pauline and the Bonapartes were flattered at this union, or rather with the alliance with this Roman prince, the Italians on their side were equally pleased.[1] The same, how-

[1] "My origin," Napoleon himself said, "has caused me to be regarded by all Italians as a compatriot. When my sister Pauline married Prince Borghese there was only one opinion in Rome and in Tuscany in the family of the latter and all its branches: 'It is not a *mésalliance*,' they said; 'she belongs to one of our old families'" (*Mémorial*, August 6, 1816).

ever, can scarcely be said of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which, on the creation of the Empire, observed, with as much jealousy as irony, "that there was at least a *real* princess in the Bonaparte family."

As *dot*, Napoleon gave his sister 500,000 francs. Pauline brought her husband besides the estate of Montgobert, not far from Paris and at about the same distance from Mortefontaine, the seat of her brother Joseph, and from Plessis-Chamant, that of Lucien. Prince Borghese had a fortune of which the income was two millions, a gallery of pictures and sculptures that was considered one of the finest in Europe, and a collection of diamonds the bare thought of which intoxicated with joy his frivolous *fiancee.*

The First Consul was at the camp of Boulogne when the marriage took place. It was solemnised at Joseph's superb place at Mortefontaine, and the couple shortly afterwards left for Rome. Prince Borghese appeared devoted to his wife; her affection for him, however, seemed to have exhausted itself before marriage, and as always in such cases, there was none left for her husband.

Borghese would have liked to lead a quiet *bourgeois* existence, but his wife would not hear of it. Certain social functions were obligatory, particularly the customary calls on the different members of the family. Of these, the visit to be paid to Madame Bonaparte was the most important. What a pleasure, what a revenge, for Pauline to call as a princess on her sister-in-law, whom she hated, and who was only Madame Bonaparte *tout court!* This visit was a great event in her life. She wished to crush

Josephine with her splendour, who in this respect feared no rival. The colour, the material, and the style of her dress were matters of too great importance to be settled in a moment. After having taken various opinions, discussed the matter in detail and cautioned secrecy, she declared that she would wear a costume of green velvet and all the Borghese diamonds. She spent the whole day in dressing, assisted by a regular staff of maids. When ready to set out she was dazzling in her glittering shell of diamonds. Not only were her dress and head covered with them, but her neck, her arms, her hands; she was like a river of fire. On looking at herself for the last time in a mirror before getting into the carriage, she was so delighted at the dazzling reflection that her joy scarcely permitted her to speak.

Josephine was staying at this time at St. Cloud. On the way thither Pauline had time to compose herself and accustom herself to the happiness of being so beautiful. The thought of the rage of her sister-in-law when she beheld her gave her exquisite pleasure. Never woman was happier—if vanity, doubled by a little jealousy and a dash of wickedness, is happiness—than Pauline when driving from Paris to St. Cloud.

On her side, too, Madame Bonaparte had prepared for battle. She had been informed of all the details of her sister-in-law's toilette, and knowing that she would wear green velvet, she thought that the effect of this colour might be considerably diminished by a background entirely in blue. Inspired by this charitable idea, she had the *salon* in which she proposed

to receive Princess Borghese entirely upholstered in blue. In seeking to counteract as far as possible her sister-in-law's triumph, she neglected nothing to increase her own. Pauline would be covered in diamonds, Josephine affected the greatest simplicity.

The arrival of the Princess Borghese in the court-yard of the Château of St. Cloud caused great excitement. It was nine o'clock at night. The carriage, richly decorated with the Borghese arms, was drawn by six horses. A *piqueur* preceded and another followed on horseback, each having a torch. All the windows of the *château* were filled with people, curious to behold a sight to which they had not been accustomed since the commencement of the Revolution.

Pauline thoroughly enjoyed all the noise and light, but her heart opened like a rose at the first kiss of the morning sun when she heard the usher, on opening the door of the *salon*, announce:—

"Monseigneur le Prince and Madame la Princesse Borghese."

These words produced a magical effect Everybody rose, Madame Bonaparte like the others, and waited with a gracious smile while her sister-in-law approached. To Pauline, intoxicated by the general murmur of admiration as she crossed the room, it seemed as if she walked in a ray of sunshine. If ever the word "dazzling," applied to a woman, was deserved, it will describe Pauline at this moment. Her beauty really sparkled in the flame of the flashing jewels she wore. The effect she produced was, no doubt, loud and vulgar, but it was prodigious.

Pauline's conviction, however, of her success was so serious as to be droll.

The visit passed off well, Josephine was exceedingly gracious, and had the kindness to compliment the princess, with a slightly mocking smile, on her dress. Pauline no less graciously accepted the compliment; and the visit finished, the sisters-in-law kissed one another with an amiable smile, as if they had not detested one another for years.

On returning to Paris Princess Borghese invited Madame Junot, whom she met at Josephine's, to accompany her. Madame Junot at first discreetly refused.

"I do not like," she said, "to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* with the prince. You are in the middle of your honeymoon, you know—and——"

"A honeymoon with that fool!" cried Pauline. 'How absurd to think such a thing!"[1]

In reality Madame Junot did not think it, and seeing from Pauline's reply that there was no reason why she should not accept her invitation, she went back to Paris by the light of the princess's torches. On the way Pauline, who, because she was a princess, believed she had no need to be polite and had entered her carriage before her friend, made the following reflections:—

"Did you see, Laurette, how all those women were dying of jealousy? I came late on purpose. I knew my brother would have left, but that was nothing. If I did not see him, the others saw me! But did you notice how jealous *she* was? Her

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Salons de Paris.*

face had an expression that spoke volumes. Well, I am delighted. She thought to play me a mean trick by making me cross the room alone, but she little knew in acting thus all the pleasure she gave me, for it enabled me to display my beauty and my dress to the best advantage. I produced the effect I desired. But what an idiotic idea to receive in a blue *salon!* It was very ugly; blue goes with nothing—and yet they say she has taste!" [1]

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

VI

SOME days after this the young couple left for Italy. Scarcely had she arrived at Rome when the Princess Borghese, who had now quite ceased to love her husband, though he was, however, still very smitten with her, became involved in intrigues even in his very palace.

Everybody knows the beautiful Palazzo Borghese, that is called in Rome the Piano Borghese, because in form it resembles that instrument. The memory, however, of Pope Paul V., who built it, did not succeed in instilling gravity into the light character of the new inmate of this celebrated mansion. But then Paul V. himself, Pope though he was, had not been free from vanity, or rather from the deadly sin of pride, when he had inscribed above the lofty pillars of the grand central portico of this too splendid palace: "*Paulus V., Burghesius Romanus.*"

The strange manner in which Pauline interpreted her duty as a wife was hardly affected by the death of her son, little Dermide Leclerc, the godson of Napoleon. The princess, however, according to certain historians, displayed heroic courage in the face of this misfortune, and insisted on preparing her child for burial with her own hands. It may

be true. Fantastic women, whose hearts are as light as their heads, often act as if they were good. Unfortunately with them their actions are only whims, and the good ones are rare.

As for the prince, he suffered much at first from his wife's indifference, and still more from her infidelity. In Italy, however, where such things were excused by the customs of the period, and where even the name of the lover of the bride appeared in the marriage contract as part of her *dot*, this was not of much consequence. But in France, in spite of the great laxity of morals that prevailed at this time, it gave occasion for scandal.

Prince Borghese, who might have expected such treatment from his wife, but who doubtless did not expect it so soon, should have armed himself with philosophy, and, like many another husband, endured his wife and his misfortune patiently. He had a thought of divorcing her, but his powerful brother-in-law, now become Emperor, would not hear the word "divorce" mentioned in his family. He did not yet foresee that after having failed to divorce Josephine on his return from Egypt for the most serious offence, he would some years later have recourse to divorce when he could allege no other motive but his own pleasure, or rather his convenience and that of his dynasty, which is the same thing.

There was, then, no judicial separation between the prince and princess, but they no longer lived together. As a consolation the First Consul appointed his brother-in-law lieutenant-colonel in one of the cavalry regiments in the Consular Guard. But later,

for sake of appearances, the Emperor insisted on a reconciliation between the husband and wife. This took place at Nice in 1807, after the Peace of Tilsit, but it did not last long.

When the First Consul was proclaimed Emperor of the French, the whole Imperial family (save Madame Letizia, known henceforth as Madame Mère, and Lucien) came to Paris for the coronation. Napoleon had quarrelled with Lucien for having married, against his express command, a certain Madame Jouberthon, a divorced woman who had been his mistress, after having been that of many others, and who completely ruled him. He had gone to settle in Rome and his mother had followed him there. Madame Mère figures, however, in David's great picture of the coronation which is now in the Louvre. It was by the Emperor's order that she was included in this picture, for the imperious character of Napoleon was as capable of constraining history to obey him as everything else.

The coronation was, of course, an immense event in the Bonaparte family. But the sight of the Pope coming to Paris to consecrate one of its members lawful sovereign of France in the face of Europe and its representatives fired all sorts of ambitions among the brothers and sisters of the Emperor, and awoke jealousy and hatred. The elevation of Elisa to the rank of sovereign princess of Piombino was one of the causes of the family broils. Pauline and Caroline pestered their brother in their turn to do something



THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON

[*After Lefèvre*]

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for them too. The Emperor finally consented. On March 30, 1806, a series of decrees was sent to the Senate which created as profound an impression in France as in Europe. Cambacérès read them to the Senate. The first regulated everything which concerned the Imperial household and fixed the duties of the princes and princesses to the Emperor; another made Prince Murat sovereign ruler of the duchies of Berg and Cleves; while another granted the little territory of Guastalla, raised to the dignity of a principality, to the Princess Borghese. In virtue of this decree her husband bore the title of Prince of Guastalla; and if they had no children the Emperor could dispose of this principality as he liked.

Pauline was intoxicated with joy on learning that she had become a reigning princess. But since her education had been much neglected and she had not deemed it necessary after her rise in the world to make up for lost time, she still remained very ignorant.

"What is Guastalla, *fratello caro?*" she asked the Emperor. "It is a city, I suppose, and I shall have a fine palace, subjects, and an army with fine regiments and handsome officers."

"Guastalla is a village," replied Napoleon, in amazement, "in the States of Parma and Placentia."

"Only a village!" exclaimed the capricious princess. "I should not have believed it, the name is so pretty. You are fooling me. What do you think I can do with a village?"

"Do what you please with it."

"What I please? I repeat, of what use do you

suppose a village is to me? You have made Annunziata Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleves, and you have given her a State, a real State with ministers and an army; while to me, who am older than she, you only give a miserable village and a few pigs running about it. Good God!"

And she began to weep.

As the Emperor impatiently left her she said to him—

"My very dear brother, I warn you that I shall scratch out your eyes if you do not give me a State to govern a little bigger than a pocket-handkerchief, with subjects who have not four feet and a twisted tail. I need it for myself and for my husband. . . ."

"He is a fool."

"Nobody knows that better than I; but what, pray, has that got to do with governing a country?"

Pretty Pauline, so happy on learning that she was a reigning princess, was now as unhappy to know that Guastalla was only a village.[1] But her tears were not without effect. The Emperor, by a decree of the Senate, later satisfied her by creating for her husband a new and great Imperial dignity. He made him Governor-General of the Provinces beyond the Alps.

On September 21, 1807, Napoleon went with the Empress to Fontainebleau, and never was his court more brilliant than during the two month she remained there.

Among those invited to accompany the sovereigns

[1] Comte d'Hérisson, *Le Cabinet Noir*.

were Hortense, Queen of Holland; Caroline, Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleves; Madame Mère; the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden; the Prince Primate; the Grand Duke of Wurtzburg; the two Princes of Mecklenburg; the Prince of Saxe-Coburg; the Ministers of the Empire and those of Italy; the Prince of Benevento and the Prince of Neufchâtel, each of whom had a household, as well as the great officers of the Imperial household and a number of others. Princess Pauline was necessarily of the party.

Among all the pretty women at Fontainebleau she was the most remarked. At night, seen in the blaze of a thousand candles, or in the day, her beautiful eyes and her creamy complexion were equally dazzling. The Emperor desired that the ladies of his court should join him when he hunted in the forest, as he frequently did in the fine, sunny autumn weather. He organised even the women. A council, presided over by the Empress, assisted by Leroy, the chief milliner then in vogue, designed their habit.

"It was," says Madame de Rémusat, "a kind of tunic or *redingote* in velvet, short, with a skirt of embroidered white satin. The boots as well as the hat were of velvet to match the skirt, and there was a white scarf." [1]

The Empress had chosen for herself a purple habit with gold embroidery, and a hat of the same colour, also embroidered with gold. All her household naturally adopted her colour. On the other hand Queen Hortense chose blue and silver; while the

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

Princess Borghese, after a great deal of hesitation, decided upon lilac and silver embroidery. This habit suited her wonderfully, for nothing could have harmonised better with her complexion, always a trifle pale, than lilac.

It would have been difficult to behold a more pleasing sight than this squadron of women habited for the chase, although it was somewhat suggestive of a cavalcade of circus-riders, as they plunged into the sombre forest, flecked with gold by the rays of the sun and the autumn-tinted leaves. The tails of the horses, the laughter, the ostrich plumes, the cracking of the whips, mingled in the air with the tinkling of bells and the heavy beat of the galloping horses. . . . Then the vision disappeared in the foliage of the forest trees, while there resounded afar the brazen sound of the horns calling the hunters to assemble.

History has abstained from chronicling the pranks of the Princess Pauline during her stay at Fontainebleau. Her state of health, over which she worried herself less, however, than she worried her *entourage*, was perhaps the cause; while the discipline which the Emperor maintained in his court was certainly another. But although Lord Holland writes that "if the court of Napoleon was not the most polished and delightful, it was the least dissipated and immoral of any France had had for three centuries," it would be difficult to find a gathering of women more corrupt, with certain rare exceptions, than that which formed the Imperial court. How could it be otherwise, when the Empress, her daughter,

and her sisters-in-law were the first to set a vicious example ?[1]

It was during this year 1807 that Pauline, bored as usual, took it into her head to learn music. There was at the time in Paris an Italian composer named Blangini, whose graceful melodies and songs, which he sung himself in drawing-rooms, were much in vogue. So Pauline sent for Blangini and ordered him to teach her to sing. He accordingly obeyed—so well, in fact, that after having taken up music the princess took up the musician, and after a few days made him musical director of her household. This had occurred before the departure of the court for Fontainebleau. On returning from Fontainebleau, the Empress Josephine, who, if she piqued herself on knowing music and protecting artists, did not pique herself on seeking to please her sisters-in-law, particularly Pauline, took it into her head to give Blangini the same post in her own household.

On hearing this Blangini went to Pauline and told her.

"Ah," she said, "that is so like the Empress. Till I noticed you she never gave you a thought, but now she wants to deprive me of your services by acquiring them for herself. My dear Blangini, it is for you to choose between her and me."

Blangini protested that his choice was irretrievably made, and that he could desire no greater happiness than to be allowed to devote his existence to her whose favour he had first won.

A smile was the reward of this flattering response;

[1] Lord Holland, *Souvenirs des Cours de France, &c.*

but his constancy was later to receive from this inconstant fair other and more material benefits.

Doting for the moment on harmony, the princess took to writing songs, which she got Blangini to set to music for her. One, of which the words were by her and the music by Blangini, had immense success, and she was so delighted that she sent her collaborator, as a means of thanking him, a splendid jewel. One must admit that if Pauline was often inclined to avarice—as she was to all the other deadly sins—she had still more often bursts of generosity. When she had artists to sing at her receptions, she knew how to recompense them in a manner worthy of their talent. Thus she gave Garat a valuable scarf-pin as a souvenir of the first time he sang for her. Crescentini, who was a Knight of the Iron Crown, received a diamond cross; and Madame Grassini a superb ornament. It is only fair to say that never was a reigning house so generous to artists as Napoleon and the princes and princesses of his family.

The following is an example of their generosity, which, in this instance, was excessive:—

Princess Pauline, who was one evening entertaining her brother Louis, King of Holland, requested Blangini to sing. He, unfortunately, had a cold and was unable to sing a note.

"Where in the name of the devil did you pick up such a cold?" asked the King of Holland.

"Yesterday, sire, while walking in the rain."

"Princess Pauline," said the King at once, turning to his sister, "how can you let your musical director walk? You should give him a carriage.



LOUIS BONAPARTE, KING OF HOLLAND

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Promise Blangini that he shall have from to-night what I ask for him."

"I promise," said Pauline.

And this is how Blangini came to have his *coupé*, two horses, and the money necessary to keep them and a coachman into the bargain.[1]

[1] Blangini, *Souvenirs*.

VII

TOWARDS the end of 1808 the Princess Borghese went to Nice for her health. She had previously taken the thermal baths at Gréoulx, in Provence. All the bathers who have taken this cure are familiar with the little Château de Laval, to which Pauline often drove, and also the old oak that is still called the Princess's Oak, under which she would pass the whole day.

At Nice she resided in a charming house belonging to a M. Vinaille, which she had rented for the season. It was beautifully situated, with a garden filled with orange-trees and sweet-smelling flowers that extended to the sea.[1]

The Princess had left etiquette behind her in Paris. The regulation of etiquette, at the time the Empire was proclaimed, had at first greatly amused her, and, like her sisters, she was pitiless in exacting all the honours due to her rank. The Emperor had even been annoyed by the refusal of these recently created princesses to abate a little of their pride. But with etiquette, as with everything else, Pauline had ended by being bored; and at Nice

[1] This house is now a convalescent home for naval and military officers.

there was not a suspicion of it. In the mornings the princess breakfasted alone in her room, and in the evenings dined with her whole household.

This little court was composed of Madame de Chambaudoin, Madame de Barral, Mademoiselle Millot, her reader, and Mademoiselle Faivre, her maid of honour; while Dr. Peyre was responsible not only for the health of the princess and her ladies, but for the general management of the household. Soon, the walks in the beautiful garden, the drives, and excursions by sea ceased to distract the beautiful, bored princess. It was useless to suggest reading or fancy-work. She took a fancy, however, for music, and recollecting that she had a director of music, she sent to Paris for him, and after this there were concerts at her little court. These only took place at night, for after breakfast everybody assembled in the *salon*, where the princess would amuse herself with relating all sorts of anecdotes, more or less *risqué*, of the Imperial court. She spared none of the members of her family, and in moments of excitement related even the most private affairs.

The monotony of the life she led at Nice would have bored others besides Pauline, and she sought to amuse herself in a manner that was not altogether innocent. Dreaming one day, probably of Rosina and Lindor, and perhaps too of Julie and St. Preux, while singing with Blangini she fell suddenly and sympathetically into his arms. From that day the princess manifested a passion for music, or rather, as no one in the little court doubted, for the musician.

She was, indeed, so wrapped up in him as to become jealous to the point of refusing to allow him to go out without her permission, and even then obliging him to say where he was going.

Her permission, moreover, was not always granted. One day the musician informed her that he was engaged to dine in the evening at the Prefect's.

"Blangini," replied the princess, "this evening you are dining with me."

There were other objections to the position of favourite. It was necessary to guard against the personal jealousy of the little court; there was everything to fear from the Emperor, who was sure to be informed of this new caprice of his sister; and there might perhaps also be reason to dread the rage of the offended husband, though this was infinitely less probable. Blangini, who was by nature anything but quarrelsome, had finally worked himself into a state bordering on distraction, when one day his princess invited him to go for a drive with her in her carriage.

At the idea of the unexpected honour paid him he turned pale. It was to announce publicly her *liaison*. What would the Emperor say? He who knew so well how to remove their lovers from his sisters by sending them to gallop over Spain and Portugal, where the guerillas disembarrased him in his turn of them. He feared lest he should be sent by the next mail a subaltern's commission, with the command to carry post a dispatch to Lisbon. And then he would make the acquaintance of bullets and cannon! If this music pleased Charles

XII., who, the first time he heard it, declared he never wished to hear any other, and if it delighted thousands of soldiers in the French army, it was far from being to the taste of this musician. At the thought the unhappy fellow broke into a cold sweat. Fear, however, gave him courage, and he dared to say—

"Go for a drive with your Imperial Highness! To be compromised in that way! What would the Emperor say?"

"I command you to accompany me," replied Pauline, who laughed at everything—at the Emperor, at what people would say, and at her lover into the bargain.

This adventure terminated for the pusillanimous musician in a manner that wounded his *amour propre*. Some days later the Princess Pauline told him that the Emperor had been informed that she had been for a drive with a "monsieur," but that when he learnt "this monsieur" was only her musical director he had said nothing. Blangini was then completely reassured, but he could not at the same time prevent himself from feeling annoyed that the Emperor should consider him, after the danger he had run, as a man of no importance.[1] If it had been Crescentini, *par exemple*, but he . . .!

One day the Princess Pauline took it into her head to go to Antibes. She wished to revisit the house known as Château-Sallé, where she had lived

[1] Blangini, *Souvenirs*.

with her mother and sisters at a time when none of them dreamt of the immense fortune in store for them. As the journey was to be made by water a large barge was engaged. It was gaily decked with flags and festooned with flowers. In the centre of the boat a sort of howdah had been erected of glass, with red silk curtains, for the sister of the puissant Emperor of the French, along each side of which a double row of rowers, clothed in white with blue facings, ran like a garland. Flattery, of course, did not fail to inform the gracious princess that her galley recalled that of Cleopatra when going to meet Antony. Pauline was not quite sure who these personages were, but she acknowledged the comparison as the most delicate of compliments, and her smile testified her pleasure.

This excursion was not made incognito. The commandant of Antibes had been notified of the visit of her Imperial Highness, and he awaited her on the quay, while the whole population lined the banks, less to render homage to the august visitor than to satisfy a very natural curiosity. Scarcely had Pauline set her foot on shore than she was saluted by the cannon which protected Antibes, and conducted to the commandant's house, where every preparation had been made to receive her befittingly. A banquet was given in her honour, after which there was a reception and ball. The following day the visit was made to the house that was the object of the excursion.

On finding herself once more in it, Pauline pretended she was fifteen again ; not that she was once

more a child—she had never ceased to be one—but playful and gay as a little girl. She ran from room to room, relating prettily her impressions to the official people who followed her.

"That," she said, "was my mother's room. I slept in that little closet next her; my sisters were on the other side of the house. My brother, Napoleon, used to occupy this room when he paid us a surprise visit for a couple of days. Ah, how fond he was of us!"

Indeed, Napoleon proved himself to be the most affectionate and devoted of brothers, but except from Pauline he was destined to receive nothing but ingratitude and treachery!

It was a sensible idea that the frivolous Pauline had conceived in wishing to revisit a spot where she had passed so many happy days as a girl, and it proves that her heart at all events was not completely stifled by the brambles and weeds of her passions, caprices, and vanity. But she should not have revisited Château-Sallé with the pomp she did. It is only in solitude that one can enjoy the reflection of tender memories. The least display, the presence even of a stranger, prevents them from returning to the soul that has experienced them, as a crowd in a flowery mead chases away the butterflies and makes the birds silent. Not only was Pauline accompanied in state by a train of military and civil functionaries, but she even brought with her her lover, Blangini! What reflections, had she been less frivolous, her soul might have made on the contrast between the innocence of her youth and the moral ruin of her brilliant existence!

On the following day Pauline, enchanted with her excursion, returned to Nice in her galley decked with its multi-coloured flags. The morrow of a *fête* is not often gay. Scarcely had she returned to Nice when a messenger in the Emperor's livery brought a dispatch for her Imperial Highness. She no sooner opened it than her face immediately assumed a sullen expression. Some one asked what had happened.

"*Pardi*, it's my husband; who else do you suppose it could be? Yes, the prince is coming to-morrow. The Emperor has appointed him something or other in Italy. He is to pass through Nice on his way to Turin, and take me along with him. Could anything be more ridiculous?"

And thereupon the princess, who expressed herself in regard to her husband with the utmost freedom, fell into a rage, in which she said a number of bitter things, and with a surprising volubility that only women when angry are capable of, the upshot of which was that she would have preferred to remain the widow of General Leclerc, with only twenty thousand francs a year, rather than to be the wife of——.[1] But respect for the reader will not permit the word the princess employed, in the hearing of her whole court, to be repeated.

Prince Borghese did, indeed, arrive at Nice. Before leaving for Bayonne when he embarked in that unjust and disastrous Spanish war, Napoleon had appointed his brother-in-law Governor-General of the

[1] Blangini, *Souvenirs*.

Provinces beyond the Alps. This high post, after having been held by Marshal Jourdan, was then filled by General Menou, he who when in Egypt had become a Mahometan, changed his name to Abdallah, and married an Egyptian woman. All this, however, had not given him talent, and it was owing to his incapacity that Egypt was lost. But Abdallah-Menou, *ci-devant* Marquis de Menou before the Revoluton, was seventy, and Napoleon deemed it time for him to retire and to give him a successor. This latter was Prince Borghese, who received orders to assume the duties of his post at Turin immediately. He had at the same time received a magnificent diploma, illuminated on parchment, which contained the decree of the Senate of 2nd February, creating the Governor-General of the Provinces beyond the Alps a Prince of the Empire.

Commanded by the Emperor to go to Turin, to pick up his wife *en route* and carry her with him to the seat of his government, the prince quitted the splendid Hôtel Borghese—formerly the Hôtel de Choiseul-Charost, and now the British Embassy in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré—on April 4, 1808, accompanied by Colonel Curto, his principal aide-de-camp. His household followed three days later.

Before leaving Paris the Emperor took a mean advantage of Borghese. He had done the same once before in the time of the Consulate, when he made him marry his frivolous sister. This time he bought his gallery of sculptures. This collection, unrivalled in Europe, was not for sale. But Napoleon,

chatting one morning with his brother-in-law, said—

"*À propos*, Camille, I forgot to tell you that I am buying your statues."

It was in vain that the prince replied that they were not for sale, being heirlooms of his house, which he had not the right to dispose of.

"I did not ask you if you wished to sell them," replied Napoleon, "I said that I would buy them. Name your price."

"Sire," returned Borghese, "my father refused twenty-five millions that an English company offered him."

"Twenty-five millions! It is too much; I will give you eighteen."

The prince was obliged to submit to his despotic brother-in-law, who was besides equally unscrupulous in paying, for Borghese was far from getting the eighteen millions he was promised. Accordingly the unlucky prince was in no very pleasant humour when he went to take up the reins of government at Turin. Nor did the necessity of resuming possession of his wife at Nice tend to restore his good nature. Tricked by his brother-in-law and deceived by his wife, his character began to be embittered. Of a truth there was reason.

His arrival threw the little court at Nice into a state of consternation. Etiquette, or rather constraint, arrived with him. The couple, however, resumed their conjugal yoke as if they had never been estranged. It is true they did not meet at meals, and others were always present to save them from

a *tête-à-tête* that they avoided as sedulously as other couples seek it.

The prince only stayed a few days at Nice, merely time enough to allow the necessary preparations to be made for the journey to Turin. He then set out with his wife and suite. The baggage filled seven wagons. They travelled slowly on account of the delicate health of the princess. Delicate, so she said, for her health was good or bad, according to circumstances, like the princess herself. She travelled in a *berline* that had been made expressly for her by the best coachbuilder in Paris; the springs were so elastic and the cushions so soft that it was almost impossible to feel the least jolt. But this did not prevent the princess from using a sedan-chair as well. Up hill or down, that is to say at every moment, she would quit the *berline* for the sedan. Then a few minutes later she would declare that the motion was insupportable, and that she would be much less fatigued if she went on foot. Alighting, she would proceed to walk like a mere ordinary mortal. But this caprice did not last any longer than the others. She would suddenly recollect she was an invalid and was on the point of dropping from exhaustion. Then she would painfully get into her carriage again, groaning and sighing over the hardships of the journey and the cruelty of her brother who compelled her to undertake it.

But he who had the most reason to complain was poor Prince Borghese, forced as he was to endure the grievances and caprices of his charming wife. He consequently sought to avoid them as far as possible, getting out of the carriage when she got in, and

getting in again when she got out—in short, he made the greater part of the journey on foot. He preferred this, as one can easily understand, to putting up with a *tête-à-tête*. But women, like children, are pitiless. Pauline, as much of a child as a woman, had less pity than any other. Scarcely would the prince seat himself beside her in the *berline* than she would begin to torment him. Her favourite method was by declaring that his Roman title was nothing in comparison with his French one that he owed to his marriage; and she would expatiate on this subject with a complacency and tediousness that was distracting.

"We shall receive addresses in the towns through which we pass," she said, "to which it is my duty rather than yours to reply. I will prove to you that I am right. By the decree of the Senate of February 2nd it was settled that the French princes should take precedence of you. It is true you are also a French prince, though solely by virtue of having married me, and consequently I take precedence of you. That is clear, is it not? Therefore, if you please, *I* shall reply to the addresses."[1]

Prince Camille might argue the subject as he liked, he only wasted his eloquence; and in order to preserve what patience he still possessed he would make a numbness in his legs the pretext for getting out of the carriage and walking several miles to calm himself. As for the members of the court, they were obliged, by their position and by respect for etiquette, to endure all the caprices of their sove-

[1] Blangini, *Souvenirs*.

reign. They had not, like the prince, the resource of dismounting from the carriage to stretch their legs and fortify their patience.

This pretension of Pauline's gave rise to an unpleasant incident on their arrival at the first village under the prince's jurisdiction. The mayor, surrounded with all his subordinates and their families, was waiting on the road outside the village to welcome the Governor-General and his august consort. He delivered his little speech gracefully enough, and stood hat in hand waiting for the reply. Then occurred a grotesque, absurd scene. The prince was on the point of replying to the mayor, without knowing what he was going to say, when his wife, who for her part certainly knew still less, prevented him from speaking. She told the mayor that it was she who was to reply to official addresses, that it was her duty as well as her honour, and that she would always know how to perform the one and safeguard the other. Then, in conclusion, turning to her husband, she asked if it had not been agreed between them that she would reply to addresses of welcome.

Borghese impatiently made signs to his wife to be silent; while the mayor, astonished by a discussion which seemed about to degenerate into a quarrel, continued to await his reply, secretly thinking that the prince and princess would have done better to argue in private instead of in the exercise of their official functions. At last, fearing to be indiscreet, he withdrew to the side of the road, followed by his peasants, while their Highnesses, without replying, but still quarrelling, remounted their carriage and left

an unpleasant impression of their passage in the village.

M. de Clermont-Tonnerre hereupon took it upon himself to warn this spoilt child, whose chamberlain he was, of the consequences this little scene might have for her should it reach the ears of the Emperor. It was always necessary to threaten her when one wished to make her listen to reason. Pauline was afraid of her brother, and she abandoned her pretensions, swearing, however, that she would have her revenge.

At Coni everything passed off well. Their Highnesses were lodged at the Prefecture. The bishop sent them the same evening the address which he was to make to them the following day. The chamberlain spent the night preparing a reply, which the prince repeated the next day without changing countenance. He and the princess had a great reception in this town. Every one lauded his wit, his tact, and his eloquence, and opinion was unanimous as to the grace and goodness of his distinguished wife. The common people went into raptures over her.

The next day they left Coni at an early hour and proceeded to Racconiggi, the former country residence of the princes of the house of Savoy-Carignan, which has a fine park designed by Le Nôtre. A day later, April 22, 1808, the Governor-General and Princess Borghese entered Turin. A guard of honour escorted their carriage, *vivats* rent the air, the bells were rung, cannon were fired as if for a victory, and the heart of Pauline beat with joy at the thought that all this fuss was made for her.

They established themselves in the wing of the

castle that was known as the Palais Chablais. The princess chose for her apartments those nearest the Place Impériale, while her husband was free to make himself at home in the other extremity. M. de Susiano, the prefect of the palace, had prepared apartments not only for their Imperial Highnesses, but also for the members of their suite.

The city of Turin gave them a splendid *fête* at the theatre.

VIII

THE court of Turin was composed almost entirely of the same persons who formerly made that of the King of Sardinia.[1] It was extremely brilliant. As to the household of Princess Borghese, she had in reality two—one at Turin and another in Paris. If she took with her to Italy some gentlemen and ladies-in-waiting from Paris, she brought a little later some Italians to France. But the two households, although often mingled, remained very distinct and were never confused.

Mention has already been made of M. de Clermont-Tonnerre. He possessed certain serious qualities which passed unperceived in the frivolous world in which he lived. But he had flippant ones too, which were highly appreciated. He had a gift for making puns, which he did constantly, and which, in a court that in conversation did not observe the traditions of *le grand siècle*, earned him a serious reputation as a wit.

M. de Montbreton, another gentleman-in-waiting, had come to Turin at the same time as M. de Clermont-Tonnerre. He was a thoroughly "good sort." Good husband, good father, good citizen, he

[1] Stanislas Girardin, *Journal et Souvenirs*.

had also been a *bon vivant*, and possessed all the qualities that as a rule are only accorded to the dead—he was like a good epitaph. His excellent character and his anxiety to please permitted him to sojourn, without being the worse for it, in a world that was scarcely exemplary. Indeed, had he not been, before M. de Forbin, in the highest favour with his charming mistress?

M. de Forbin was likewise a gentleman-in-waiting, and as distinguished in his appearance and his manner as he was noted for his wit and his artistic tastes. At once poet, painter, and novelist, it would have been hard to find a mortal endowed with so many of the attributes of genius. Being, morever, as rich as he was intellectual, one might have wondered how he came to accept the post of mere gentleman-in-waiting, had it not been the fashion for every well-born man to dance attendance on one of the imperial princesses. There was, however, another reason. A lover of the beautiful, he naturally admired a beautiful woman, and was not the Princess Borghese beautiful beyond compare? At least it pleased M. de Forbin to tell her so in verse and prose, and it pleased Pauline to be praised in any and every manner. M. de Forbin painted her portrait, full face, profile, three-quarters. Pauline, who also loved the beautiful, regarded these pictures with admiration, but above all him who painted them. Believing it her duty to encourage art, she thought she could not do better than encourage artists; and she encouraged M. de Forbin so well that she ended by making him her lover. This idyl, however, attracted the notice of

the Emperor to the happy gentleman-in-waiting, and was the cause, it is said, of his subsequent banishment.

M. Alfieri de Sostegno, the grand master of the ceremonies, the director-general of etiquette, was a nullity and a bore. He was also a widower. One pretended that his wife had died solely of the *ennui* that emanated from him. The gravity, however, which he feigned concealed his insignificance so cleverly that fools, that is to say the majority, regarded him as profound, for who ought to be bored in a court where all found amusement?

Nor should history forget to mention one who filled the modest position of scullion. He had formerly been a king—of the Congo, it is true, but still a king. This dethroned sovereign, brought from Africa on a slave ship, and sold as a slave, was of the finest black, and as deformed as the Quasimodo of Victor Hugo. The princess had given him, doubtless out of irony, the name of Don Juan. Before having been relegated to the kitchen Don Juan had been appointed "superintendent-general of the bath of the princess."[1] But he had been so penetrated with the importance of his duties, and performed them with so much majesty, that, having no regard for *les convenances*—which at a European court, even though it was that of the Princess Pauline, were not those of the Congo—he had more than once crossed the *salon* during an official reception carrying in his hands the articles that proclaimed his office. As he could never understand that such behaviour was

[1] Blangini, *Souvenirs*.

not only not sanctioned by etiquette, but was absolutely incongruous, his mistress had finally lost patience with him and provided him with other employment in the kitchen. Don Juan was a gourmand, so in default of a throne the post of scullion was one which suited him the best.

The household of the princess was not so well furnished with ladies as with gentlemen. Madame de Chambaudoin, however, was conspicuous for her intimacy with her beautiful mistress. Madame de Champagny, whose husband later became Duc de Cadore and Minister of Foreign Affairs, was also a member of Pauline's household. Proper, dignified, and always appearing to be slightly bored, one wondered how she came to be there. Scandal charitably pretended that she was too ugly, too foolish, and too badly dressed not to be virtuous.

Madame de Barral was the favourite of the Princess Pauline. She was as tall as a drum-major, and had a charming, tiny head, full of wit. One could not help asking oneself how so small a head could contain so much wit. It was probably because it found the place in which it lodged so confined that it was always seeking to escape. No one at court dressed better than she.

Madame la Marquise de Bréhan also was charming, with her blond hair rippling in fluffy curls behind her ears. She had great eyes, very small hands and feet, and teeth as white as her skin. Her temperament was as lively as her tongue was caustic, but she was popular and a very devoted friend.

Mademoiselle Millot was a very important person-

age, though so small herself. She was the princess's reader. The post was a veritable sinecure. So not knowing how to occupy her time, and being constantly in a state of restlessness, Mademoiselle Millot gave free rein to her original turn of mind, which not being restrained by a calm reserve, frequently conceived ideas of which the extravagance was only equalled by the actions of her mistress. There was a romance in her life which finally brought her to her grave.

There were various other ladies, whose names are, however, not worth repeating, unless it be that of Madame Hamelin, the princess's maid. She was the widow of a naval officer, who had been obliged to accept this post, so little in accord with her character or her station, as a means of educating her children.

Among all these women there were, doubtless, many worthy of respect, but "public opinion held in light esteem those who were in attendance on the Princess Borghese, for her behaviour was, unfortunately, reflected on the young and pretty women who composed her court."[1] It was, too, not every woman whom Pauline would have liked to have had in her household that would accept the honour. It was flatly refused by Madame de Lostanges, among others.

There is no royal establishment without its chaplain. This one possessed two, but never, it must be admitted, had a court greater need of their services. They were the Abbé de Sambussy and the Abbé de Bombelles. The care of the souls of the household

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

was, however, beyond their capacity. In such an atmosphere perhaps even the chaplains were in need of salvation. Never was abbé more singular than the Abbé de Bombelles. He had been a major-general in his youth, in the days when a few privileged persons came into the world with a colonel's aigrette on their heads. Later he became a priest, when so many others, like Talleyrand and Fouché, gave up the calling. So the cavalier manners of the court of the Princess Pauline did not shock this former cavalier. At the Restoration, appointed Bishop of Amiens, he preserved, among other habits formed at court or in the barracks, that of dancing, in spite of his violet cassock. He also made a collection, consisting of eighty-four volumes in manuscript, of stories which were more or less edifying. It was Bombelles who, to recall the fact that he had been a major-general, attached two silver stars to his mitre, emblems of his former rank!

Princess Pauline had hardly been a fortnight at Turin when she received a letter from her brother Lucien, informing her that he was coming to visit her. As Lucien was not on good terms with Napoleon, Pauline dared not risk the chance of displeasing the Emperor by receiving him at Turin. She would have preferred to have written her brother not to come on some pretext or other, but Lucien followed in a few hours the letter that he had sent her. She therefore decided to go to Stupinigi, a villa outside Turin, where she intended to spend the summer, and where her brother's visit would not attract attention.

Lucien's visit was the beginning of a series of other visits. There were so many that the Chablais Palace was called at this epoch the "Imperial Tavern." The kings and princes coming and going between Italy and France never failed to stop in the Piedmontese capital. Prince Aldobrandini, brother of Prince Borghese, King Joseph leaving Naples to rule in Spain, King Murat going to Naples to replace him—all stopped at the Chablais and gave an air of great gaiety to Turin.

There were large receptions, dinners, balls, and suppers, but in spite of all Prince Borghese was bored. He did not know how to kill time any better than his wife. The only paper he read was the *Journal des Modes*, and he was constantly regretting the society of his old friends in Paris, the concierge and his family of the Hôtel d'Ogny, when, without wife and free from care, he saw the future open before him bright and beautiful.

His wife was not much happier. She, too, frequently yawned. The aversion she had for her husband extended likewise to the nine departments he governed. She wrote letter upon letter to the Emperor beseeching him for permission to leave Piedmont, which was not granted. Her fury was far from being dumb.

"I am," she would complain, "a French citizen, and no one has the right to keep me out of my country against my will. Is it because I am Princess Borghese? A fine excuse! I did not wish the title. I was content to be the widow of General Leclerc, with my twenty thousand francs a year. For God's

sake why can't I be free to do as I please instead of being tyrannised over in this manner? In truth, if they wished to kill me, they could not find better means. Yes, I am sure they wish to kill me. *Pardi!* this damned climate and the *ennui* which oozes out of this palace will soon do it. They will bury me within three months if I remain here. I am much more ill than any one has any idea of."[1]

And in the belief that she was ill, or rather to make others believe it, "she drugged herself and affected to suffer in a manner compatible with her imaginary disorder."[2] She took all sorts of medicine without procuring any benefit. One night at Stupinigi her whole household was roused; the princess declared she was horribly ill and the doctor was sent for. She had convulsions, syncopes, in a word, "all that she had wished to have." The doctor, who had at first believed that it was merely one of the nervous attacks to which she was subject, was this time really alarmed. He now agreed that a change of air was necessary, and wrote to this effect to the Emperor, who finally permitted her to take the cure at Aix, after which she managed to visit Paris.

Napoleon, whom she had exasperated by her previous conduct, lectured her very seriously and made her give him her word that she would behave herself for the future. She promised all he asked

[1] Mademoiselle Avrillon, *Mémoires.*

[2] Ibid.

—and resumed as before her usual manner of life.[1]

[1] Her beauty gave her so much pleasure that not wishing to deprive her *entourage* of the pleasure of admiring her beautiful form, she had Canova execute her statue—the famous *Vénus Victorieuse*. *A propos* of this statue, it is said that the princess, seeing Canova hesitate when she proposed that she should herself pose for him, cried, "Why not? What are you afraid of?" "Of falling in love with my statue," was the reply. "You're a silly flatterer, Canova," she laughed.

Later, a lady asking her how she could have brought herself to pose quite naked, Pauline replied, "Oh, there was a fire in the studio!"



BERTHIER, PRINCE OF NEUFCHATEL AND OF WAGRAM

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IX

AS the Emperor wished that the members of his family should keep up their position in a suitable manner, Pauline received once a week. But she did not know how to receive; of the three sisters of Napoleon she was the worst in this respect. Yet how could it be otherwise? Thinking only of herself, her beauty, and her own amusement, she neglected her guests, especially the ladies; and being ignorant, she had no conversation, an occasional *bon mot*, a lively retort, some affected efforts to please, and that was all. However, her *salon*, by reason of the people she entertained rather than owing to her amiability, was not a disagreeable rendezvous.

She gave some very brilliant balls in Paris. The dancers were principally officers of the general staff and of the Imperial Guard. Among those who especially attracted the notice of the princess was M. Jules de Canouville, "one of the beaux of the army,"[1] attached to the staff of Marshal Berthier. At this epoch one lived so fast and the officers passed so little of their time far from the battlefield that no time was wasted in commencing an intrigue.

This new *liaison* of the Princess Pauline was of all

[1] Général de Marbot, *Mémoires.*

—and she had many—the one that lasted the longest.[1] She was so destitute of the moral sense that she did not even seek to hide her weakness. Her lover was equally indiscreet. Both of them talked openly of their passion, and *tout Paris* soon followed their example. Each day some new scandal was reported of the beautiful sinner, and the one that was the most *risqué* was, as ever is the case, the one most appreciated. The following had an immense success.

Bousquet, the fashionable dentist, was sent for by the princess to examine her teeth. He hastened to obey her summons, and on arriving was shown into a room where he found Pauline in a charming dressing-gown, while a handsome young man, lazily stretched on a sofa, was contemplating her with a languishing air. Her Highness explained to the dentist, who listened to her respectfully, the nature of her dental ailment, and was opening her pretty mouth, which did not seem to require the least service of the practitioner, when the young man on the sofa let fall these words :—

"Pray take care, monsieur, what you are about. I am extremely fond of my Paulette's teeth, and I shall hold you responsible for any accident to them."

"Make yourself easy, sir," replied the dentist; "I can assure your Imperial Highness that everything will be all right."

And he set himself to his task. Whilst he scraped the princess's teeth with a care that was almost religious, the young man made his observations in a tone of the utmost solicitude. The dentist con-

[1] Général Thiébault, *Mémoires*.

tinued to reassure him to the best of his ability, and having finished his work withdrew. As he crossed one of the antechambers, some of the ladies-in-waiting asked him how her Highness had borne the operation.

"Her Imperial Highness supported it excellently," he replied, "and she should be very proud of the devotion of her august husband, who has just manifested it to me in the most touching fashion. In truth, it is a pleasure to see a home so united and great folk set an example not only of beautiful teeth but of conjugal virtue. Fancy, his Imperial Highness was so anxious about the princess's teeth that he never ceased to make all sorts of observations to me. No, truly, I am touched, deeply touched, and I shall make a point of letting everybody know what a tender scene of domestic attachment I have just assisted at." [1]

No one had the heart to deceive the excellent dentist and tell him that Prince Borghese was at Turin, and that the young man whose conjugal anxiety was so edifying was Captain de Canouville. But the same evening *tout Paris* was convulsed by the recital of the adventure.

Napoleon did not look with a favourable eye on the young officers on the staff of the Prince of Neufchâtel, whom he knew were likewise on that of the Princess Borghese.[2] Besides Captain Jules de Canouville, there were M. Achille de Septeuil, M. Sopranzi,

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

[2] Général Thiébault, *Mémoires.*

M. de Flahaut, M. Fritz de Pourtalès, M. Alexandre de Girardin, &c. The Emperor, who was not certain which of them was the special favourite of Pauline, was informed by the following incident.

During the festivities to celebrate the famous interview at Erfurth between the Emperor Alexander and Napoleon, the latter had given his Russian Majesty a superb silver-gilt dressing-case, a compliment which Alexander repaid by sending the French Emperor three fur cloaks of inestimable value, for it was impossible to procure the sables of which they were made at any price, since they were a tribute of the Samoyedes to the Czar that they had not the right to sell. Napoleon, in his turn, had himself made a present of one of these furs to his sister Pauline, who appeared to him capable of appreciating it. The second he gave to Madame Bernadotte, Princess of Ponte-Corvo, and he kept the third himself.

But one day Canouville, after having recited some pretty verses to his mistress which he had composed, and which Talma had taught him to declaim properly, happened to mention that he had got a new hussar's uniform, when Pauline exclaimed—

"I have an idea! You shall have the Emperor Alexander's sable. It's the very thing for your *pelisse!*"

Canouville protested, but consented in the end. The fur was immediately cut into strips and sent to the tailor.

A few days later the Emperor held a great review in the court of the Tuileries. Captain Canouville

wore his new uniform, and looked very handsome in his *pelisse* trimmed with the precious fur and its diamond buttons, which were also a present from Pauline. He rode a very fine but restive English horse. At a certain moment, when the Emperor was surrounded by his staff, Canouville's horse began to back till, in spite of all the rider could do, it backed into the Imperial *entourage*. Canouville could have killed it on the spot, as Marshal Oudinot did his one day at a similar review; but this would only have attracted Napoleon's attention to him the more, which was what he wished above everything to avoid. So he continued to struggle with the cursed beast, till it finally backed into the horse of the Emperor himself!

"Who is that officer?" cried Napoleon furiously.

Whilst Berthier advanced to reply, the Emperor with his eagle eye noticed the sable that he had given to Pauline—there was none other like it in Paris—and the diamond buttons that he had also given his sister in Italy. After the review he took the Prince of Neufchâtel aside.

"What are all these giddy fellows that you are surrounded with doing here?" he said. "Why are they not at the front? What does this idleness mean when somewhere or other cannon are always rumbling? I can't understand you, Berthier. You always have to be told a thing before you perceive it."

Berthier bit his nails and said nothing.

"Well," continued the Emperor, "let M. de Canouville leave this evening for Spain. There should be some dispatches for the Prince of Essling; it is he who shall take them."

The journey to Spain became from this moment "a sort of ostracism inflicted on gallants when the intrigues of the virtuous princesses of the blood and the great ladies of the court made too much noise." [1]

During Canouville's absence, which was not so very long, the Princess Borghese being bored as usual, sought other distractions. Scarcely had her lover departed than she wanted another. So she gave a hint to Captain Achille de Septeuil, a young, good-looking fellow, that she liked him. It is certainly flattering to be noticed by the prettiest woman of her day, particularly when she is a princess, and vanity takes as much pleasure in such a thought as in any other. Pauline, who till now had ever been victorious in her affairs of the heart, never imagined she could suffer defeat. This, however, now happened to her. M. de Septeuil's heart was not free; he was in love with some one else. He did not consider an infidelity with the same tranquillity as women in general and the Princess Pauline in particular. To her intense astonishment, then, he let her understand as respectfully as possible that she could flutter elsewhere.

At the same time Canouville returned to Paris, but scarcely had he arrived at the War Office than he was given fresh dispatches for the Prince of Essling. So he was obliged to mount his horse again and return at once to Spain. But this time he did not travel alone. For companion he had poor Septeuil. Strange irony of fate! The one was exiled for having responded to the advances of her

[1] Duc de Broglie, *Souvenirs;* Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

Imperial Highness, the other for having refused to respond to them.[1]

This campaign was destined to be unfortunate for Septeuil. At the battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro his leg was broken by a cannon-ball. "It was necessary," said General de Marbot, "to amputate it on the field of battle. He endured this terrible operation with courage, and is still living."[2]

As for Canouville, after having made the disciplinary journey to Spain four times he was sent to Russia, and had his head blown off by a cannon-ball at the battle of Smolensk, according to the Duchesse d'Abrantès, or at the battle of Moscow according to Marbot. Constant declares that this brave officer was killed by a ball from a French cannon that was fired after an action in which he had displayed the most brilliant courage.[3]

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*
[2] Général de Marbot, *Mémoires.*
[3] Constant, *Mémoires.*

X

THE bath was regarded by the Princess Borghese as an institution of great importance. She was in the habit of taking the cure at one of the fashionable *villes d'eaux* every year, and she always had her bath every day. On passing through Bar-sur-Ornain, the principal place in the Department of the Meuse, on her way to Aix-la-Chapelle, her Imperial Highness sent a messenger in her livery to inform the Prefect of her arrival. The Prefect was M. Leclerc, a brother of the princess's first husband, General Leclerc. The messenger having delivered his message, added that he had been ordered by her Highness to request the Prefect to have a bath of milk and a douche of the same liquid ready, so that the princess might take it as soon as she arrived, before breakfasting. A strange manner, one would think, of getting up an appetite!

The Prefect, who was on the most friendly terms with his sister-in-law, at once had all the cows in the department milked. When the cracking of whips and tinkling of bells announced the arrival of the pretty, capricious, spoilt child, the Prefect hastened to help her alight.

"Carry me, as you used to do, dear brother; I can't possibly walk by myself," said Pauline coaxingly.

The Prefect did not wait to be asked twice, and taking her in his arms, carried her up the stairs and placed her on a sofa in the best room of the Prefecture.

"And now my bath," she prattled, "is it ready? And my douche?"

"Ah," he replied, "the latter is another matter, there is no apparatus. . . ."

"On the contrary, it is quite simple," she rejoined. "Have a hole pierced in the ceiling above the bath in this very room, which will be just as convenient for me as another, and from the floor above I can have my douche. I am afraid I am causing you a lot of trouble, dear brother, but it is necessary for my health."

One would have thought that she had completely forgotten the time when she lived on the charity of the municipality of Marseilles.

The Prefect, however, surpassed himself in his zeal to satisfy the *bizarre* caprice of his former sister-in-law. The smiles of the princess were his thanks; but imagine the confusion into which the quiet Prefecture was thrown by the milky freaks of the lovely traveller! And what a big hole in the ceiling! "As a result," says the Maréchale Oudinot, who relates this episode, "numerous splashes of milk curdled on the furniture and for a long time made the room smell like a badly kept dairy."[1]

A few months later, after her return from Aix-la-

[1] Duchesse de Reggio, *Récits de guerre et de foyer.*

Chapelle, the Princess Borghese had one of the greatest pleasures of her life. This was to see the Emperor finally decide to *unmarry* himself. She had always urged him to get divorced, and now it took place. She was so happy on the day of this ceremony that she was less remarked for the beauty of her dress than for the little care she took to control her feelings. A triumphant joy was painted all over her face in a manner that contrasted with the gravity of the great historical event that was taking place. But Pauline only saw the fall and effacement of her whom she had hated since 1797. She was radiant, and she wished Josephine to know it!

During the marriage ceremony of the Emperor and the Archduchess Marie Louise all the members of the Imperial Family had a *rôle* to fill. That of Pauline consisted in carrying, with her sisters and sisters-in-law, the Queens of Westphalia and Holland, the train of the new Empress. Pauline also gave a superb *fête* at her seat at Neuilly in honour of the marriage. She was then in all the *éclat* of her beauty; there was only one voice as to it, and that was a cry of admiration. Rarely was she so delighted with her success and the praise she heard on all sides. But Stanislas Girardin, who was present, could not help making the following grave and just reflections:—

"This *fête*," he says, "where money was of so little account, was very unpopular, and one cannot prevent oneself from reflecting sadly when one thinks that the yearly revenue of several provinces was wasted in a few hours. Such extravagance is the

tribute the court levies on its vanity and is a step towards ruin. Experience teaches but never corrects." [1]

The excessive splendour of this entertainment also caused Napoleon to reflect. Perceiving that the effect on the people of Paris would not be good, he thought to make it so, says Girardin, by ordering Pauline to give another *fête* two days later, when five thousand people of all ranks should be invited. The invitations were distributed by the municipality, which caused the *bourgeois* to say, "The court has sent us the leavings." For this Tivoli where one entered free had no success, as might have been expected. The private apartments of the palace were closed and everything seemed to say, as before the Revolution, "It is good enough for the *canaille*." [2]

The scandalous conduct of his sisters, particularly of Pauline, was one of the causes, and far more powerful than one thinks, of the disaffection of the masses for Napoleon. The people are honest and indignant at weaknesses at which the world only smiles, and which certain historians pass over complacently in silence when they do not cite them as traits.

The winter of 1811–12 was not as brilliant at Paris as previous ones. The harvests had been bad, and the political horizon was darkened by threatening clouds. The war with Spain, which devoured men by thousands, was a terrible sore in the nation's side and a heavy chain on Napoleon's feet. A general uneasiness was apparent, which the excessive luxury

[1] Stanislas Girardin, *Journal et Souvenirs.*

[2] *Journal de Maréchal de Castellane.*

of the court and the high civil and military authorities scarcely concealed. These symptoms, however, of an approaching crisis did not disturb Pauline. Taken up, as ever, with her medicines and her follies, she did not notice them. At a ball she gave on January 17, 1811, dress-coats were seen in Paris for the first time.

With the year 1814 the Empire began to go to pieces.

Pauline, who had passed the winter partly at Nice and partly at Hyères, was living, in the month of April, in a villa situated at Luc. She was only acquainted with a few of the great events that had just taken place ; even the abdication of the Emperor was unknown to her, when on the 26th April a messenger arrived, about two in the afternoon, to tell her that he would soon pass through Luc. In fact a carriage shortly afterwards stopped at her door; it was the carriage of the Commissioners of the Allies, who informed the princess of the events which had just overwhelmed France and hurled Napoleon from the throne.

Pauline could not believe what she was told; at last, when it was impossible to continue to doubt, she fancied that her brother had been killed in the midst of these disturbances and that the news was being kept from her, or that she was being prepared to receive it.

" If the Empire is no more," she said, " my brother, then, is dead ! "

They tried to convince her of the contrary, and the unhappy woman, in a transport of anguish, exclaimed :—

"But how could he survive it all?"

Then the tears began to flow, and the excitement brought on a fainting attack. When she recovered she heard the cries of hate and fury of a ferocious mob under her windows!

It was in the midst of these cries of "Down with the tyrant!" "Down with Nicolas!"[1] which she heard as she lay in her bed with only Madame de Saluces and M. de Montbreton for protection, that Napoleon alighted from his carriage at the door of the princess. The news she had just heard had been a terrible blow to Pauline, and she had taken to her bed. She wished to rise to receive her brother, but her strength was unequal to the effort, so M. de Montbreton received him for her. The chamberlain did not recognise him at first. The Emperor was wearing an Austrian uniform to escape the fury of the people, who had at last risen against him.

"The wretches would like to kill me," he said, "I have been obliged to assume this disguise to escape them."

The chamberlain ushered him into Pauline's room, who, recognising the voice of her brother, stretched out her arms to him. But noticing the Austrian uniform, she dropped them.

"I cannot kiss you in that," she said; then added in

[1] At the time a pamphlet was being sold all over France, entitled *Histoire véritable et lamentable de Nicolas Bonaparte, Corse de naissance, dit Napoléon le Grand*, and the name of Nicolas had become very popular with the enemies of the Emperor, who no longer called him anything else.

a heartbroken voice, "Oh, Napoleon, what have you done?"

The Emperor withdrew into an adjoining room, and having changed into other clothes, came back to his sister. In the meantime Pauline had risen, and she greeted Napoleon tenderly and tearfully. The Emperor was also moved, and those who witnessed this interview were deeply touched by it.

Pauline kept the Emperor a day and a half at her villa, and when the hour came for the "Man of Destiny" to go into exile, she proposed to accompany him, declaring that she was ready to depart instantly for Elba.

She went the same night to Muy, in order to have only a few leagues to travel the next day in going to Fréjus. But she did not accompany the Emperor to Elba; he would not hear of it. She went there once, however, on the 1st June, to carry him an urgent dispatch from Murat, but only stayed a day in the island. She returned again two months later. Her mother had been for some time living with Napoleon. Pauline occupied a house on a cliff overlooking the little town of Porto-Ferrajo.

After Napoleon's departure from Elba, Pauline set out for Rome, but she stopped at Viareggio, between Pisa and Lucca, where she rented a house in the suburbs. She wished to remain there in order to take the baths at Lucca, as she had done for several seasons with beneficial results. But finding herself recognised and watched, she quickly escaped this espionage and came to Paris.

In the straits in which Napoleon found himself the princess, giddy and frivolous though she was, nevertheless proved that she was not altogether devoid of heart. To assist her brother she placed at his disposal a part of her fortune and her diamonds. It was but a natural act that has been lauded too much, but history should all the same record it to her credit; for kindness, generosity, gratitude are so rare in this world that one should not miss the pleasure of acknowledging them when met with. In thus assisting Napoleon with her resources, in despoiling herself of her diamonds for him—she who loved them so much! —Pauline did her duty. It is, perhaps, the sole time she ever did it, but once again, we repeat, it was to her credit, and her conduct during this unhappy period almost makes one forget her misconduct during her years of prosperity. What a difference in this respect between her and Elisa and Caroline! Napoleon accepted Pauline's sacrifice, but the carriage which contained her diamonds was captured by the English after the battle of Waterloo, and these jewels were exposed in London to the curiosity of the public.

XI

WHEN the news of the defeat of Waterloo reached Paris, Cardinal Fesch, foreseeing difficulties without number which the fallen family of Bonaparte would have to face, wrote to his niece Pauline to urge her to face the situation bravely and to avoid foolish expenditure.

"You should," he wrote to her, "practise the greatest economy. In the situation in which we now find ourselves we are all poor, even with what remains from last year." Lucien, he added, was of the opinion that the whole family should cross the ocean with Napoleon and settle in the United States. This resolution he did, in fact, take, as the following letter to Pauline proves:—

"NEUILLY, *June* 26, 1815.

"You must have heard of the new misfortune of the Emperor, who has just abdicated in favour of his son. He is going to the United States, where we shall all join him. He is calm and full of courage. I shall try to join my family in Rome, in order to take them to America. If your health permits we shall meet



CARDINAL FESCH
[*After Meynier*]

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there. Adieu, dear sister. Mamma, Joseph, Jerome and I all send you love.

"Your affectionate brother,

"LUCIEN." [1]

He did not, however, act on this resolution, and Joseph alone went to America.

Cardinal Fesch returned to Rome, where he rented the Palazzo Falconieri for his sister, Madame Mère, who shortly afterwards went to reside there. This palace, situated in the Via Julia, at the junction of the Corso and the Piazza Venezia, contained two suites of apartments. The cardinal reserved the second floor for himself, while the mother of Napoleon occupied the first and gave a home in it to her daughter Pauline, whose health was shattered by these last disasters.

Prince Borghese withdrew to Florence.

It had finished, then, the dream in which Pauline had lived for twenty years. The unfortunate creature fell seriously ill, and to her great distress she could not even think of going to Saint Helena to mitigate by her presence the captivity of her brother. Besides, the English would not have given her permission. But "she endeavoured to sell everything she possessed of value in order to send the money to the great exile." [2]

When Napoleon, writing to his mother, begged her to find a cook who would be willing to go to Saint Helena, Pauline undertook the commission, and was

[1] *Mémoires de la Générale Durand.*

[2] *Rapport de M. de Blacas*, April 1, 1817.

not long in discovering a man named Chandelier, who accepted with joy the mission of going to cook for Napoleon. Pauline likewise wrote the following letter to Lord Liverpool, when early in July, 1821, the Abbé Buonavita, a Corsican priest returning from Saint Helena, came to Rome to inform Madame Mère of the desperate state of health of her illustrious son:—

"ROME, *July* 11, 1821.

"MY LORD,

"The Abbé Buonavita, arrived from the island of Saint Helena, which he left the 17th March last, has brought us the most alarming news of my brother's health. I enclose a copy of some letters which will give you the details of his physical suffering. His disease is fatal at Saint Helena. In the name of all the members of the family I implore that he may be allowed a change of climate. If our prayer is refused it will be his death sentence. . . ."[1]

Alas! it was too late; the fatal news was already on the way.

Dr. Antommarchi, having left Saint Helena after the Emperor's death, went, as is well known, to deliver his last message to his wife, Marie Louise. He found her at the theatre. She had already forgotten and replaced her husband.

He then went to Rome and called on Louis, ex-King of Holland. He, it can scarcely be credited, would not receive him, giving as his excuse that he was too ill!

[1] Héreau, *Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène.*

But Pauline, who was quite as ill as Louis, did not hesitate to receive the worthy Antommarchi when he called. She asked him a thousand questions about her brother, his sufferings, his last moments, and was so deeply affected by what Antommarchi told her of that long agony that her grief aggravated the bad state of her health.

Pauline was not without sensibility; unfortunately she had not received any kind of moral training, and the germs of goodness that are observable in her had never been developed. Moreover, though she knew her "Petrarch" slightly, she had almost no education at all. It is to this lack of moral and intellectual culture that the countless inconsistencies that signalised her passage through life must be attributed. Her responsibility is, therefore, less great than that of Elisa, who was brought up at Saint-Cyr, or that of Caroline, who was a pupil of Madame Campan. It seems that Madame Mère was more responsible than one has imagined, or has cared to say, for the frivolity of her daughters. She did not know how to instil into their minds the precepts of virtue, but left them to rush, like wild horses, across the pleasures and frivolities of life, without requiring of them any duty, or without teaching them respect for themselves and for the dignity of life. Although she has been greatly belauded, she was really unequal to the task of performing the duties of a mother. Did she ever encourage morality in her family? Did her children ever consult her in the great crises of their lives? Never, and they married without even consulting her. In such

things is not a mother always more culpable than her children?

In the month of September, 1823, the Princess Pauline's health being worse, the doctors declared that the air of Rome was not good for her. She was removed, then, very carefully to her beautiful Villa Paolina, near the Porta Pia. But it was still Rome; the air of the open country or the sea would have been preferable.

A while later, when her health permitted, she was taken to Florence. There she languished between ups and downs, when a singular event gave her her death-blow. Some brigands, under a redoubtable chief named Decesaris, broke one night into the house of the Prince of Canino (Lucien Bonaparte) and carried off his old friend, the Comte de Châtillon, who had linked his fortune to his for twenty-five years. The brigands immediately sent to inform the prince that his friend would be at his disposal on the payment of a ransom. This Lucien paid, and Châtillon was restored to him.

This incident, which in the days of her prosperity would have diverted her, gave Pauline a severe nervous shock. From this time her health became worse daily, and on June 9, 1825, she who had been the "Queen of Folly" under the Consulate and the Empire, expired at Florence.

Prince Borghese, at the request of Pope Leo XII., whom Madame Mère had begged to intercede, decided to carry the poor sinner the pardon for her sins.

Pauline, however, feeling that the "hour of God," as Bossuet says, had struck, had a mirror brought to her and, like Nero, who when dying exclaimed "*Qualis artifex pereo!*" (What an artist the world loses in me!), said, looking at herself in the glass for the last time, she could die in peace, for she was still beautiful.

This was her consolation.

She entered eternity with a smile on her lips and a mirror in her hand!

CAROLINE MURAT

GRAND DUCHESS OF BERG AND CLEVES, QUEEN OF NAPLES

(1782–1839)



CAROLINE MURAT, GRAND DUCHESS OF BERG AND CLEVES,
QUEEN OF NAPLES

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I

HAD Caroline Bonaparte had the sense of duty as pronounced as her passion for power, she would have been one of the most notable women of her time. But the Queen of Naples is not to be compared to Elizabeth or Catherine II., or to Marguerite de Valdemar, the "Semiramis of the North." She is hardly on the same plane even with her sister Elisa, the "Semiramis of Lucca," as M. de Talleyrand ironically called her. She takes precedence of her, however, not only from the extent of her ambition and—melancholy advantage!—of her treachery to Napoleon, to whom she owed her crown, but also from her mental capacity. No more than her sisters did she care for duty, conjugal fidelity, or pledged honour, but more hypocritical than they, or, if you will, more clever, she sought to conceal her vices—at least she did not perceive any interest in publishing them. Like her sisters, too, but even more so, she wished to play the *rôle* of sovereign, and succeeded, like them, in only becoming a courtesan. It is interesting to study the development of ambition in her, to see how it stifled every other sentiment, led her into crime, and would only have been

satisfied when she had replaced her brother Napoleon on the throne of France, which on several occasions was the aim of her shameless intrigues.

Maria Annunziata de Bonaparte was born at Ajaccio in 1782. She was, therefore, only a child when she came to Marseilles in 1793 with her proscribed family. She assisted her mother and sisters to discharge the slight duties of their poor home, as far as her years would permit. In the sordid circumstances to which Signora Letizia found herself reduced there was no room for training or education; she would, besides, have been unequal to the task of inculcating their principles, not having herself any more of either than was necessary, as the lives of her three daughters fully prove. But when Bonaparte's good luck and genius triumphed over the Sections on the 13th Vendémiaire, whereby he was drawn from obscurity and his family from poverty, he, who thought of everything that his mother—so praised and so incapable—forgot or neglected to do, decided that it was time to educate his young sister. Annunziata was therefore sent to Madame Campan's, who had established at St. Germain-en-Laye a school that was much in repute.

Having formerly been one of Marie Antoinette's ladies-in-waiting, Madame Campan had revived, in the midst of the new society which had established itself on the ruins of the *ancien régime*, the refined and courtly manners of old France. She was, moreover, renowned for her tact and her intelligence. Consequently the most distinguished families sent their daughters to her. She had the two Mesdemoiselles

Auguié, children of another former lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette, one of whom was later to marry Marshal Ney. There was also Hortense de Beauharnais, the future Queen of Holland, and Mademoiselle d'Almenara, daughter of a rich banker, who was to become the wife of General Duroc. The education of all these young girls had been greatly neglected during the Revolution, for the religious houses, which alone until then had been devoted to the bringing up of girls, had been closed. So Annunziata, by reason of her exceedingly elementary knowledge, did not find herself very much out of her sphere among her school companions, who were similarly behindhand, and who, from Madame Campan's misguided indulgence, especially for those whose parents were highly placed, remained so.

There is little information worth repeating in regard to this particular pupil of Madame Campan. One knows from the Duchesse d'Abrantès that Annunziata "during the campaign in Egypt was a pretty girl, but only that, for her ignorance was superlative." [1]

In 1797 Maria Annunziata accompanied her mother and sisters to the Château of Monbello on the occasion of the reunion of the family that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Italy arranged after the truce which crowned the deathless series of his victories. She was at the time a tall, very attractive girl of fifteen, whose charms did not pass unnoticed among the officers on the staff of General Bonaparte. General Murat, in particular, was

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des Salons de Paris.*

captivated by the seductive young Corsican. He paid her a thousand delicate attentions, as much on her own account as to attract to himself the favourable notice of her illustrious brother; and Annunziata, flattered by the devotion of the young general, who passed for the bravest of the officers of the Army of Italy, did not pretend to conceal her satisfaction. Modesty and reserve were never among the virtues of the Mesdemoiselles Bonaparte.

One day General Murat asked of Napoleon the hand of his sister Annunziata, "to whom, I know not why," wrote Lucien Bonaparte, "the First Consul has given the name of Caroline after having obtained with some difficulty our mother's consent."[1] Murat, in spite of his superb assurance, would never have dared pretend to the hand of the sister of the First Consul if he had not received encouragement. The idea of such a marriage singularly flattered his ambition, and above all his vanity, but at the same time it served the interest of Josephine, who desired, as has been said, a support in the family against the family, and it was she who had encouraged Murat. For she was aware that the couple had conceived a pretty idyl to which marriage should be the natural *dénouement;* and as she never forgot her own interests she thought this marriage would be infinitely useful to her, attacked as she was, rightly or wrongly, by her brothers-in-law, by Elisa, by Pauline. She believed that if Caroline owed her happiness to her, she would be grateful and cause the jealousy and rancour she aroused in her husband's family to cease.

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

Besides, General Murat, to whom Bonaparte partly owed the success of the *coup d'état* of Brumaire, and who had a great reputation for bravery in the army, would be a powerful protector for her. So she favoured Murat's cause to the best of her ability. The general on his side got Bessières, his friend and compatriot, who had considerable influence with Bonaparte, to speak in his favour. Bessières acquitted himself conscientiously of this mission, and sang the praises of Murat each time he found an opportunity.

When Madame Bonaparte believed the ground to be sufficiently prepared, she pricked him to the charge. The same evening the First Consul summoned a sort of family council in the *salon* of the Petit Luxembourg. There were present Josephine, her daughter Hortense, her son Eugène de Beauharnais, and Bourrienne. Bonaparte submitted Murat's proposal, and each said all that he or she could think of in favour of the brilliant cavalry general. Josephine above all was unceasing in her praises, recalling his bravery at the battle of Aboukir, and his happy intervention on the 19th Brumaire, at the head of the grenadiers, in the hall of the Assembly at Saint-Cloud, at a moment when Bonaparte's affairs began to take a turn for the worse. It is not correct, as Bourrienne has said, that the First Consul objected that "he could not, in the elevated sphere in which fortune and glory had placed him, mingle his blood with Murat's, who was the son of an innkeeper." [1]

At the same time Caroline Bonaparte was also sought in marriage by General Lannes, who, being

[1] Bourrienne, *Mémoires.*

the son of a dyer and cleaner, was not of a family more highly placed in the social system than that of Murat. Personally the First Consul would have preferred Lannes for a brother-in-law, but he had just been divorced, and, though it was for a good reason, Bonaparte had an instinctive aversion for divorced people. Be this as it may, he argued less in behalf of Murat than of Lannes, whose character he lauded infinitely more. There were, besides, other offers for the hand of Caroline. According to the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Napoleon would have liked, shortly after his return from Egypt, to marry her to Moreau. He even had an idea for a moment of giving her to Augereau;[1] but he submitted to all that was said in favour of Murat and gave his consent to the marriage.

Murat has been cited as one of the handsomest officers in the army. He was tall, perfectly made, and had a proud air which pleased women, and an affable, cheery manner which fascinated men. But he lacked a something which is only obtained by birth and education. Murat was not *distingué*. As his perception was very sharp he perceived this, and did all he could to become so gracefully. He often succeeded. He was, as has been said, the son of an innkeeper at La Bastide-Fortunière in the Department of Lot. His parents, designing him for the Church, had obtained a bursarship[2] for him at the

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès.

[2] In most of the public schools of France the Government has a certain number of *bourses*, representing the full amount of the annual college expenses.

college of Cahors, through the influence of a gentleman in the neighbourhood. After studying for some years he left college to enter the seminary at Toulouse. There he wore the *soutane*, but did not make any vows. His first year of theological, or rather philosophical, study—for it was in the latter that one took a degree at the seminary—terminated well, and the young man prepared to spend the vacation with his parents. He had received the money for the journey, but he could not resist the temptations and pleasures that Toulouse offered to a lively fellow of his age. So when the moment of departure arrived he had not a sou in his pocket. Luck willed that at this moment a regiment of dragoons should pass through Toulouse. At the sight of them Murat felt the soldier-blood course through his veins. The idea of a military life made an irresistible appeal to his heart; and the theological student discarded his *soutane* and ran to enlist.

At the end of two years he was a quartermaster. His education, his fine presence, and his pronounced love for the service had procured him this promotion, which was rapid for the period, but in order that he might escape a severe punishment for some act of disobedience, his captain, who liked him, procured his dismissal. He was then taken by one of his relations, a mercer at Saint-Céré, as an assistant in his shop. But the Revolution had commenced and it marched with a giant's stride. To the young man dreaming of adventure the calm of the shop was distasteful. So he got himself chosen, thanks to the influence of the deputy Cavaignac, as one of

the three troopers that each department was obliged to furnish when the Constitutional Guard of Louis XVI. was formed. Bessières was one of the other two. These two troopers became intimate friends and marshals of the Empire, and death alone broke their friendship. It has been seen how devoted Bessières showed himself to be in pleading Murat's cause with the First Consul.

From the Constitutional Guard of Louis XVI., Murat passed in 1792 to a roving corps of "hussar foragers." Soon afterwards he became a sub-lieutenant. His promotion then advanced by leaps and bounds. On the 13th Vendémiaire the young officer, as commander of a troop of horse, attracted the attention of General Bonaparte, and the Duke of Ragusa has described with what happy-go-lucky presumption he went the following year to request the general in command of the Army of Italy to take him as aide-de-camp. Bonaparte consented, and it was as colonel in command of a squadron of the 21st Dragoons, with the temporary rank of major-general, that he departed for Italy.[1] There he displayed great bravery, but his reputation was damaged for a moment at the siege of Mantua where by his indecision he incurred the displeasure of his general. He then asked to be allowed to command a brigade of infantry under Joubert, re-established his reputation, and went to Egypt in spite of Bonaparte, thanks to the influence of Josephine and Madame Tallien. Here he distinguished himself in every engagement, particularly at Aboukir, where "he made a prisoner with his own

[1] Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires.*

hand of the pacha-in-chief and was wounded by a bullet in the jaw. This wound, though grave, scarcely left a scar."[1]

At the time of his marriage Murat was thirty-three and Caroline eighteen. The difference in age was, perhaps, rather too great; but with the army the marriage was very popular. It was celebrated on January 20, 1800, not at the Luxembourg, according to Bourrienne, but at the *mairie* of Plailly, near Mortefontaine, the seat of Joseph Bonaparte in the Department of the Oise.[2] The ceremony was entirely civil. It was not till January 7, 1802, that the religious ceremony took place, when Hortense de Beauharnais was married to Louis Bonaparte in his little house in the Rue de la Victoire.

On her marriage the First Consul gave his sister a *dot* of thirty thousand francs. But this did not prevent him from giving her the usual wedding present as well. He was not rich at this time, so he selected from Josephine's jewel-case a diamond necklace, which he gave his sister, not having the money necessary to buy her one suited to his high station, and not wishing, like his wife, to make debts. This, however, was not at all to Josephine's liking, and she revenged herself on her husband by replacing this necklace with another still more beautiful, worth two hundred and fifty thousand francs according to Bourrienne, or five hundred thousand according to the Duchesse d'Abrantès!

What is still more curious in this affair is that

[1] Duc de Raguse, *Mémoires.*

[2] *Bourrienne et ses erreurs.*

Josephine bought this necklace without paying for it. When the bill was rendered she declared to Berthier that she had made this purchase without the authorisation of her husband and that therefore she could not ask him to pay the bill. So Berthier settled the affair by paying the jeweller, Foncier, and charging the amount to the account of the liquidation of the hospitals of Italy! It is known that Berthier hoped by this complacency to obtain permission for Madame Visconti, his mistress, to accompany him to the receptions at the Tuileries. But Napoleon would never consent to receive this great coquette, whom he called "la sottise de Berthier."

II

SHORTLY after his marriage General Murat left for the campaign of Marengo. He returned to Paris with the First Consul, but soon had to leave again to take command of the corps of observation that had been left in Italy. During this time his wife, who was *enceinte*, remained in Paris.

The winter of 1800–1801 witnessed the revival of Society in Paris. The theatres had never been closed during the Revolution, but this winter the audiences were larger than ever. The *salons* had hardly begun to open again, so it was to the theatre that people went to meet one another. On the 3rd Nivose, Madame Murat had dined at the First Consul's, and it was understood that afterwards the party would go to the Théâtre Français, where the company from the Opera was to give the celebrated *Oratorio* of Haydn. While General Bonaparte was getting into his carriage, his aide-de-camp Rapp observed to Josephine that her shawl was slipping from her shoulders. To arrange it to her liking occasioned some delay, much to the annoyance of Madame Murat, who, not wishing to miss a note of the *Oratorio*, impatiently urged her to make haste, as Bonaparte had already gone on.[1]

[1] Général Rapp, *Mémoires*.

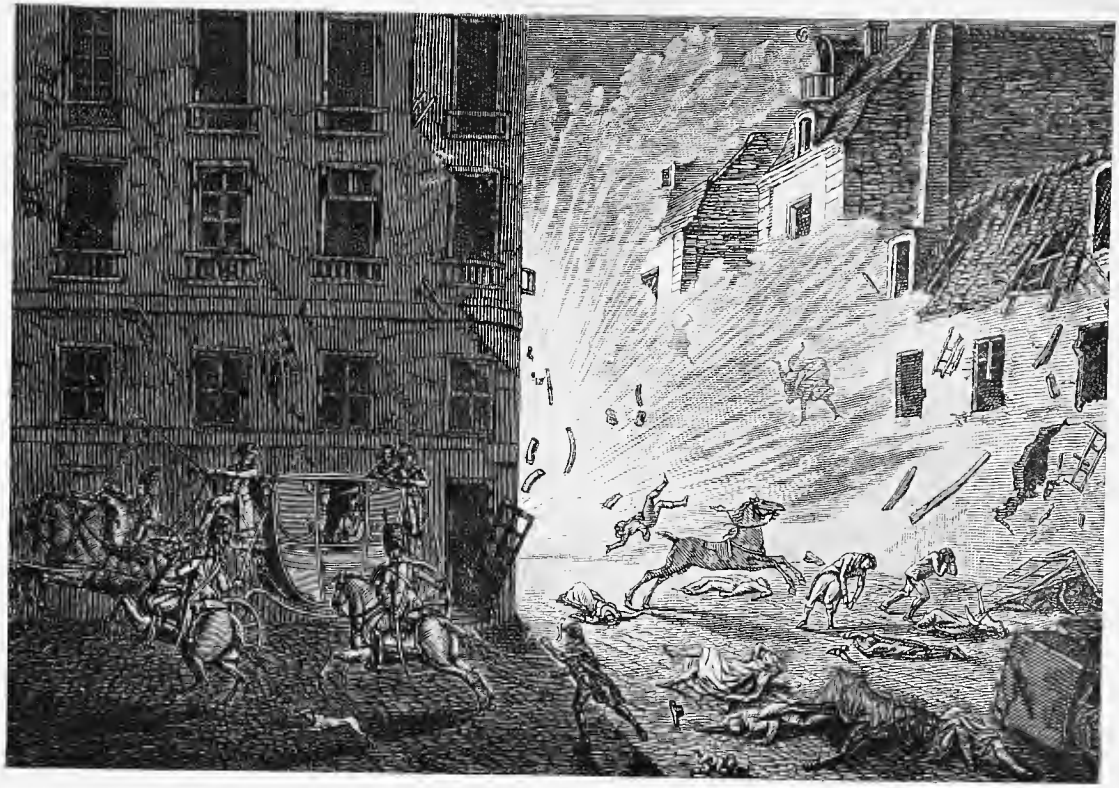
They started, but had barely arrived at the theatre when an infernal machine exploded between the two carriages. Rapp, who was in the carriage with Josephine, Hortense, and Madame Murat, immediately alighted and ran to the theatre to learn if anything had happened to the First Consul. Josephine was so frightened that she lost her self-control; and Hortense was almost in as bad a condition as her mother. Madame Murat, however, whether the emotion displayed by her sister-in-law and Hortense had piqued her *amour-propre* and made her wish to appear stronger than these two weak women, or whether she was really so, showed no emotion whatever,

"The character of the family appeared in her," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "for though it would have been very natural for the sister of the First Consul to display emotion in such a situation, she was perfectly mistress of herself throughout the entire evening."[1]

It is to be greatly regretted that later she did not display the same force of will to curb her disordered passion for power, as well as her other passions. As to the coolness of which she gave a proof, she was the first to benefit by it, for, being in a delicate state of health at the time, it was in fact this *sang-froid* which preserved her from an accident that a slight emotion often occasions in other women in the same situation.

Murat, who was getting tired of Italy, was naturally very anxious to return to Paris for his wife's

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*



THE EXPLOSION OF THE INFERNAL MACHINE

[From a print of the period]

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confinement. So he wrote to the First Consul for permission. But Bonaparte replied drily, "I do not approve of all the observations you have made. A soldier should remain faithful to his wife, but not desire to return to see her when he fancies he has nothing more to do." This letter was dated January 19, 1801. Two days later, the 21st, Madame Murat gave birth to her first child, a boy, who received the names of Napoleon Achille Charles Louis. It was some considerable time after this event before Murat could obtain permission to come to Paris to see his wife and son, and then only for a few days.

When the First Consul re-established the Catholic religion in France he set apart Easter Day (28 Germinal of the Year Ten—April 17, 1802) for the installation of the Concordat. There was a great religious and military ceremony at Notre Dame. Madame Murat, who was again *enceinte*, made a point, however, of being present at this ceremony. The Duchesse d'Abrantès has given a description of the costume she wore on this occasion. "I can still recall," she says, "the dress worn by Madame Murat, with her pink velvet hat crested with a tuft of feathers of the same colour and framing her fresh, white face. She wore a dress of Indian muslin embroidered with beautiful needlework and lined with pink satin like the hat. On her shoulders was a shawl of Brussels point, and her dress was trimmed with the same lace. I have seen her more richly dressed, but never prettier." [1]

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*.

The following week Madame Murat gave birth to a little girl, who received the names of Letizia Joseph. In respect to the last name, it should be stated that Caroline did not wish to feminise it, because she wished every one to know it was bestowed on account of Joseph Bonaparte and not Josephine. For although the latter had arranged her marriage with Murat, the rivalry between the Bonapartes and the Beauharnais had still continued. It was soon to change to animosity and then to hate.

Murat's duties kept him a long time in Italy, where he was filling the post of Commander-in-Chief of the French troops beyond the Alps. On the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, he had received orders to invade the kingdom of Naples. As it was impossible to tell when he would return to Paris, his wife went to join him in Italy, and it was at Milan, on May 16, 1803, that she gave birth to her third child, Lucien Charles François Napoleon Murat. Not long afterwards General Murat left Italy. His post was given to another, and he was appointed, in November of the same year, 1803, Military Governor of Paris. This post had been filled before him by General Junot, who was given the command of the fine division of grenadiers at Arras.

Madame Murat was overjoyed to see her husband made Military Governor of Paris. He had likewise under his command sixty thousand troops, and she found herself first in order of precedence after the wife of the First Consul. Her ambition, however, far from

being satisfied, was only increased. As for Murat, he was content, thoroughly content, and did not hide it. He did not yet imagine that his brother-in-law could have any other ambition than to live and die Consul. It was only after the proclamation of the Empire that Caroline was seized with the "throne fever," which she communicated to her husband.

It is difficult to tell whether she foresaw the prodigious future that fortune had in store for her brother, whose past had already been so momentous; or if she merely wished to consolidate her position and to acquire friends devoted to her personally. Perhaps there was a little of both in her conduct, but she certainly had much foresight and shrewdness. Like a clever woman, who, even in the highest rank, knows that it is a good thing to make friends, Madame Murat displayed to all an affability and kindness which were, however, scarcely natural to one so calculating and selfish. But in spite of the inexperience of her youth, some secret instinct told her that one renders one's power ten times as great by making oneself loved, and that this is to be done by amiability and good deeds. With her it was not spontaneous but thoroughly studied. She seemed to model herself on the celebrated Madame de Tencin, who made it a rule never to rebuff anybody, for, as she shrewdly said, "even if nine out of ten do not care a farthing for you, the tenth may become a useful friend." So Madame Murat did not hesitate to bend her haughty and essentially selfish nature to meet the exigencies of her position, and above all to the end she proposed to attain. The

crowd took her amiability for goodness of heart, whilst at bottom it was merely affectation.

When Colonel Auguste Colbert was married she made this former aide-de-camp of her husband in Italy and in Egypt magnificent presents, and took upon herself to provide the *corbeille* of his bride. By this generous action she won the devoted affection of these two families, and in similar ways she made many friends who never said anything but good of her.

But with the elevation of her family, Madame Murat, from appearing at first quite natural, began to play the *grande dame*. A sensible woman who saw a good deal of her under the Consulate, said of her at this time, "I expected every moment to see her bud into a princess."[1] And General Thiébault, invited one day to lunch with Murat, made the same observation.[1]

"My eyes," he says, "were fixed in spite of me on these two favourites of fortune and nature (Murat and his wife), and I only appreciated the more their affability, which was perfect. After an excellent lunch, served on very beautiful china, a coarse earthenware pot, containing some sort of sweet, was brought in. 'It is a favourite dish in my part of the country,' said Murat; 'my mother has made it and sent it to me.' I thought the sentiment which provoked these words perfect, and the dish, of which I partook, tasted all the better for it. But it was evident to me, all the same, that it would not be long before it would cease to be included in the *menu* at Murat's, and

[1] *Mémoires d'une inconnue.*

that all such traces of his early predilections would be obliterated." [1]

In fact, only dreaming of grandeur, Madame Murat soon prohibited her husband's homely pleasures, which she found too "vulgar" for her lofty station, and endeavoured to suppress everything that could recall Murat's humble origin. She succeeded in this, but at the cost to Murat of the half of what was best in him. This was effected, however, only by degrees; her design at this time was to proceed cautiously in laying the foundation of her power. Her husband loved her, and, like all women, she took advantage of him, to do what pleased her rather than him. So she proceeded slowly but surely; it was what might be termed her period of apprenticeship in power.

Madame Murat was less frequently seen at the Consular court at Malmaison than her sisters. Apart from her natural aversion for her sister-in-law, an aversion that her marriage had not dispelled, her repeated *grossesses* and her sojourn in Italy did not afford her many opportunities of attending it. But when she did go to Malmaison she gave great animation to the parties that the First Consul was fond of arranging. She was the leader in the pursuit of pleasure. She was also a member of the dramatic society at Malmaison, which was composed of Duroc, Bourrienne, Hortense and Eugène, Isabey, Lauriston, General a d Madame Junot, Didelot, the prefect

[1] Général Thiébault, *Mémoires*.

of the palace, &c. After Madame Junot (Duchesse d'Abrantès) Madame Murat was considered the best actress of the company.

The rivalry, or rather the hate, which existed between the Bonapartes and the Beauharnais naturally prevented any cordiality between the two families. Their intercourse was cold, hostile, ceremonious, like that which, between people who dislike one another and are obliged to meet, is regulated by consideration for appearances. But in spite of the greatest care, there were often quarrels, occasioned chiefly by the children of Hortense and those of Caroline. The First Consul had a particular predilection for little Napoleon, the eldest son of Hortense. It is known that the malice of Bonaparte's enemies did not hesitate, without the slightest warrant, to attribute the paternity of this child to him. One day in the family circle at Malmaison, while his little nephew was riding on his knee, he said to him playfully—

"Do you know, child, that you may be a king one day?"

"And Achille?" instantly said Murat, who was present.

"Ah, Achille," replied Bonaparte, "he will make a good soldier."

This reply deeply wounded Madame Murat's *amour-propre*, who saw in it a preference for Hortense's child. Bonaparte did not wish to appear to notice it, but as if to show his sister and her husband that he was not unaware of their feeling for the Beauharnais, he added, still speaking to the child, but in reality addressing the Murats—



LETIZIA MURAT NAPOLEON LOUIS (Eldest son of Hortense) NAPOLEON III. LOUISE MURAT ACHILLE MURAT LUCIEN MURAT

NAPOLEON WITH HIS NEPHEWS AND NIECES ON THE TERRACE OF ST. CLOUD

[*After Ducis*]

"In any case, I advise you, my poor child, if you wish to live, never accept any refreshment that your cousins may offer you."[1]

Napoleon's jokes were heavy, but on this occasion he did not joke. He let it be seen, without wishing to say it openly, that he knew the selfish, imperious, and ambitious nature of his sister, and by his remark he meant it clearly to be understood that he believed Caroline was capable of going to the length of a crime to make sure of her pre-eminence and that of her children. Did he already foresee in the dim future her treason of 1814? At all events, if the kisses he bestowed on Caroline's children were rather rough, they were the same with his other nephews and nieces. It was characteristic of his Corsican nature. He had a singular rage for pulling their ears, sometimes so hard as to make the poor children cry. Caroline was very vexed when she saw her little Achille the victim of his uncle's caresses, and more than once her son's tears made her weep too.

One day the First Consul, pulling the ears of the little fellow, hurt him and he cried out. To teach him not to cry his uncle pulled his ear again harder. Achille, having freed himself, came back to him in a fury, and raising his little fist shouted, "You are a villain, a wicked, wicked villain!" To prove the contrary, Napoleon should have embraced his nephew and made him forget the pain he had gratuitously inflicted by some show of affection. But tenderness was not in his character. Corsicans scarcely know what it means, and though Napoleon used to say, "I

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

am less of a Corsican than one thinks," he was really more so than any one or he himself thought. Instead of quieting his nephew, he became angry and gave him a violent slap on the face. The child ran weeping to his uncle Lucien, who was present, while Madame Murat was so upset that she was taken ill, "from the effort," says Lucien, who relates this episode, "she made to control her feelings, which such violence to her child outraged. As for the First Consul, he left the room shrugging his shoulders and slamming the door, and saying that Caroline had always been an affected creature, and acted like all parents who spoilt their children." [1]

[1] Th. Jung, *Lucien et ses Mémoires.*

III

AT the time of the Duc d'Enghien affair, Murat was accused, very wrongly, of having urged the First Consul to the rather Corsican extreme which he determined upon too quickly. It is unjust that his fame should be stained with such an accusation. Not the least splash of the blood of the last of the Condés touched Murat. As Governor of Paris his part was strictly confined to choosing the officers who composed the court-martial that the First Consul had appointed. He had even the merit, and it certainly is one, of beseeching his brother-in-law to be merciful. Bonaparte answered him harshly, and the next morning, when the two officers of the staff sent to Vincennes came to report the sad news of the execution, neither Murat nor Caroline could restrain their tears.

"If the fact is true," adds Murat's biographer, "one cannot help observing that eleven years later the death of Murat under similar circumstances did not draw a tear from the eyes of any of the Bourbon princes." [1]

Alas! it did not even draw one from the eyes of his widow.

[1] Général Thoumas, *Les Grands Cavaliers du Premier Empire.*

Not content with having been appointed Consul for life, General Bonaparte made up his mind to be proclaimed Emperor. The pear was ripe at last, and he plucked it.

An event so unheard of could not take place without exciting the ambition of the haughty Caroline. Her husband, indeed, was made a Marshal of the Empire, but what about herself—what rank would she occupy in the new order of things that her brother was creating? Would she not be merely the wife of a simple marshal? What! on a par with the Maréchale Lefebvre, who had formerly been a washer-woman and a *cantinière;* or the Maréchale Brune, who had been a dressmaker? The idea was too humiliating. She was consequently extremely pre-occupied with devising plans to alter this state of affairs. As she did not dare to mention them to her brother, she fell back on Talleyrand and Fouché. She overwhelmed them with questions. Did they know the secret intentions of the Emperor? Could they tell her what he meant to do for the different members of his family? But in spite of great skill in concealing her own plans and sentiments, she was not without feeling a certain anxiety, which betrayed itself in her looks and often in her words.

At last the great day arrived. Cambacérès came to St. Cloud at the head of the whole Senate, and in the name of the people proclaimed the First Consul Emperor of the French. In the evening the whole Imperial family were gathered at a gala dinner. Etiquette was henceforth firmly established, and



NAPOLEON RECEIVING AT ST. CLOUD THE DECREE OF THE SENATE PROCLAIMING HIM EMPEROR OF THE FRENCH

[*After the picture at Versailles by Rouget*]

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General Duroc, grand marshal of the palace, notified each that for the future Louis and Joseph were to be styled prince and their wives princess.

The sisters of the Emperor, who were not included in this princely elevation, displayed the greatest annoyance that their brothers' wives, who were not of their blood and only Bonapartes by marriage, should receive a title that was refused them, the own sisters of the Emperor! Their annoyance, it appears, was even very ill-concealed. Madame Murat particularly gave way to violent despair, and, says Madame de Rémusat, "was during dinner so little mistress of herself when she heard the Emperor several times address the *Princess* Louis that she could not restrain her tears. She drank several glasses of water to try to calm herself, but her tears always got the better of her." [1]

This jealousy became so apparent as to throw a decided chill on the family reunion, and everybody was made uncomfortable by it. The Emperor, calm and natural, "smiled malignantly," and Madame de Rémusat, who as a friend of the Empress Josephine was naturally of the party of the Beauharnais, did not fail to observe this truly historic scene and to make a mental note of her impressions before putting them on paper.

"As for me," she says, "I experienced the liveliest surprise, and at the same time I may say a sort of disgust, to see the face of this young and pretty woman disfigured by such a sordid passion. Madame Murat was then twenty-two or twenty-three years

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

old; her dazzlingly white complexion, her beautiful blond hair with its garland of flowers, and her pink dress, all gave to her appearance something extremely youthful, almost infantile, which contrasted unpleasantly with the emotions, better suited to an older person, that she betrayed. It was impossible to feel any pity for her tears, and I believe that they made on everybody, as on myself, a very disagreeable impression." [1]

According to the same eye-witness Napoleon took a malicious pleasure in mocking Caroline's too evident ill-humour, though it is probable he had resolved to grant his sisters the title of "Imperial Highness," which they seemed to desire so much, and which he had already conferred on their sisters-in-law. Madame de Rémusat, however, says that "the next day after dinner Madame Murat had a violent altercation with the Emperor, the noise of which was heard in the adjoining room. She burst into complaints, reproaches, and tears; and demanded to know why she and her sisters were to be condemned to obscurity and scorn while *strangers* were loaded with honours and titles." [2]

The Emperor did not like his acts to be criticised or that one should offer him advice. He replied at first with equal acrimony; then, as in the end he found the request of his sisters justified, and as he never knew how to refuse his family anything, he granted what Caroline demanded with such bitterness. A note inserted in the *Moniteur* apprised France that the title of Imperial Highness

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

[2] Ibid.

was to be borne by the sisters of the Emperor as well as by the wives of his brothers.

Having become an Imperial princess, one would think that Madame Murat would have been satisfied. So sudden an elevation was enough to content the most difficult ambition, and she was, in fact, content for the moment. But before dreaming of reaching the highest destiny, questions of etiquette and precedence still disturbed her peace of mind and aroused the susceptibilities of her sensitive *amour-propre*. Etiquette had commenced its reign. In the *entourage* of the Emperor all the books had been consulted, since the time of Louis XIV., which treated of this grave matter, and these serious puerilities occupied a considerable place in the organisation of the imperial *régime*. The whole of the superannuated machinery of the old court was re-established at the Tuileries as well as at St. Cloud, and reigned even more than the Emperor.

The wounds that her *amour-propre* more than once received from the rigidity of this etiquette only sharpened Madame Murat's ambition. Henceforth all her faculties were concentrated on the single object of elevating herself and her husband still more, continually, and by no matter what means. The vastest projects, the most complicated, never ceased to haunt the imagination of this haughty young woman. Who would have suspected that under the roses of her complexion, under the grace of her twenty-three years, Machiavellian dreams of thrones and crowns were brooding, instead of dreams of happiness and love?

Marshal Murat and Princess Caroline were not the only ones who suffered from the inauguration of an inflexible etiquette. There were many other jealousies among the brilliant gilded *valetaille* which pressed in crowds round the new sovereign. Madame Maret, among others, wife of the Emperor's chief secretary, whose devotion was to procure him one day the title of Duc de Bassano, was offended to see the ladies of the Empress take precedence of her. Nothing brings people together like a mutual disgrace or even discontent. So Madame Maret became intimate with Princess Caroline. Other wounded or disappointed vanities came to swell the number of envious courtiers, and in a short time Madame Murat found herself at the head of a veritable party which was silently opposed to the Empress.

To her it was a road to the realisation of her projects, which were still vague but to which events soon gave a definite form. Moreover, in the meantime it was an occupation in accordance with her tastes. She reigned over the discontented; this was to possess a sort of temporary throne, but still a throne. Thanks to charm and dissimulation, thanks also to intrigue, she foresaw the time when she would be sufficiently strong to play a *rôle*. So cunningly manipulating the wounded vanity of the disappointed, playing upon them with infinite skill, binding them to her by kind actions and promises of the future, she little by little increased her party and aimed at making it nothing less than a power with which Napoleon himself should one day have to reckon.

IV

MEANWHILE life at the Court of the Tuileries was in full swing. There was gambling in the evening of a desultory sort, because it had been customary at the old court. The Empress alone was really fond of it. Her parties, as well as those of the princesses, were held in the *salon* that was known as the Emperor's Cabinet. The sisters of Napoleon issued the invitations to their parties through their chamberlains. To Caroline they afforded an opportunity of chatting without constraint with people she wished to win. Once or twice a week Society met at the Empress's *petites soirées*, where each vied to surpass the other in dress and above all in intrigue.

At one the Emperor was smitten with one of his amorous caprices, one which lasted longer than the others and in which Caroline took an active part —a part that, as always, had no regard for morality or conventionality. Her unrestrained ambition urged her to serve her brother not only in politics but also in the most personal and private matters. She hoped thus to insure his gratitude against the day when she should need it. So, perceiving that the Emperor appeared to admire the young and very pretty wife of an old Councillor of State, she thought

it clever, if not estimable, to pay the young woman delicate attention and make a friend of her. In a word, according to Madame de Rémusat, who has described this intrigue, Caroline assisted the passion of her brother for Madame Duchâtel to the very best of her ability.[1]

To the shame of humanity, it is such services as these that men reward the best. How many honours, posts, decorations have ever been the price of services that could not be made public! Madame Murat had little education, but her instinct and experience of the baseness of human nature understood this well. Nor was Napoleon, when it came to the question of recompense, an exception to the ordinary rule among men, and his sister duly received payment for the services she had rendered him. On February 1, 1805, the Emperor sent a message to the Senate in which he notified it of the promotion of Marshal Murat to the rank of prince and high admiral of the Empire.

"Senators," ran the message, "we have appointed our brother-in-law, Marshal Murat, high admiral of the Empire, for we wish to recognise not only the services he has rendered to the Fatherland and the particular devotion he has shown to our person in all circumstances, but to recognise also that which is due to the splendour and dignity of our crown, by raising to the rank of prince a person who is so closely allied to us by ties of blood."

It was in the midst of all the triumph of an ambition commencing to be realised that the Princess Caroline

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.



THE CAMP AT BOULOGNE

[*After the picture at Versailles by Gautier*]

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brought into the world her fourth child, Louise Julie Caroline, on March 22, 1805. She was living at the Hôtel Thélusson, where she displayed a pomp greater than that of any princess of the *ancien régime.* "She had the fancy," says Madame de Rémusat, "at the time of her confinement to have her room hung in pink satin; the curtains of her bed as well as those of the windows were of the same material, and trimmed with the costliest and most beautiful lace." [1]

As soon as she was convalescent the princess went to visit the Emperor at Boulogne, where her husband was also at the time. While she was there, Napoleon held a great review of the troops, and his sister, to make herself popular in the army, the source and mainstay of all power, as she well knew, followed the Emperor in a carriage during the whole of the review.

England, however, threatened with invasion, had just persuaded Austria and Russia to unite against France. The army in camp at Boulogne was, therefore, obliged to wheel about and march to meet its new foes. Then commenced the wonderful campaign of Ulm and Austerlitz. Napoleon had entrusted to Murat the finest command that any general could desire: the entire reserve of cavalry, some thirty-eight regiments. In spite of some rather serious blunders Marshal Murat performed prodigies during the course of this war. One would have said that he knew a crown was at the end of it. But the Emperor did not reward him immediately; he was planning the system of government which ultimately led to his

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

ruin. He appointed kings and princes who were nothing else but his vassals, obliged to obey his orders and to supply him in men and money with all the resources that it pleased him to demand of them.

In the organisation of this system Napoleon had reserved a territory for Marshal Murat as the reward of his services, but he kept his intention a secret. Already under his immediate suzerainty he had made Eugène Viceroy of Italy and married him to a Bavarian princess. He had made Louis King of Holland, and given a principality to Elisa. In this distribution of provinces and crowns, Murat and his wife had alone as yet received nothing. They were far from pleased, and their ill-humour increased in proportion to the benefits heaped upon the Beauharnais, of whom Eugène was almost a king whilst Hortense was a queen. As the Emperor's silence in respect to his intentions concerning them continued, their discontent more than once showed itself in their words and actions.

But Napoleon had not forgotten them. He finally created a principality for them which was made up of the Duchy of Cleves and the Grand Duchy of Berg, that was taken from Bavaria, which was raised to the rank of a kingdom and compensated by the acquisition of Anspach. This formed a very fine province, of which the city of Düsseldorf, pleasantly situated on the Düssel at its junction with the Rhine, was the capital. The population exceeded three hundred thousand people, and the revenue was two millions.

Here, at least, one would say, was enough to satisfy the most exacting ambition, even that of a king's son. But this principality, naturally very small as compared with Napoleon's, was far from satisfying the insatiable ambition of the former theological student and trooper of the Constitutional Guard of Louis XVI., and, according to Beugnot, "his wife was almost humiliated by it."[1] Murat, however, as Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves, joined the Confederation of the Rhine, and by his personal rank, as well as his relationship to the powerful Emperor of the French, was in a position to play a preponderating *rôle* in the Confederation.

So, dissatisfied though he was, the new Grand Duke set out to take possession of his duchies. But the Prussians did not relinquish them to him without some resistance. He entered Düsseldorf, however, on March 24, 1806, and dressed in a way that would have made any one but him ridiculous, which caused Napoleon to designate him the Franconi[2] of the Army. A few months later the Emperor requested the new Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves to cede him Wesel, an important and strongly fortified city on the Rhine, in exchange for the Duchy of Nassau and the principality of Dissembourg. Gratitude would in any one else have made the immediate acceptance of the Emperor's proposal a duty. But Murat not only raised objections, but even had the presumption to say, when Napoleon impatiently overruled these objections, that he would shut himself up in Wesel with his troops and stand a siege if

[1] Beugnot, *Mémoires.*

[2] Franconi was a celebrated circus-rider.

necessary! This bumptiousness, so completely devoid of all sentiment or gratitude, was probably the reason why Napoleon later refused to give him a kingdom as important as that of Spain.

As for Caroline, who "considered herself out of place everywhere but on a throne," [1] her dissatisfaction equalled her husband's at only being Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleves. She accepted the grand ducal crown, however, in anticipation of a better, and swore secretly, when putting it on her head, to exchange it soon for a royal one.

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires*.

V

THE Princess Caroline had been the Grand Duchess of Berg scarcely a month, when there took place, on April 7, 1806, the betrothal of the pretty Stéphanie de Beauharnais, niece of the Empress, to the Hereditary Grand Duke of Baden. The ceremony was celebrated in the evening at the Tuileries, in the Gallery of Diana. The court was never so brilliant as during the *fêtes* which were given in honour of this marriage. On this occasion the Grand Duchess of Berg wore dazzling rubies. The success of her costume and the compliments that she received consoled her for the rumpling of her pride, which she bitterly resented. For the Emperor had decreed that the young Princess Stéphanie, for whom he had an especial esteem, should take precedence everywhere after the Empress and before the Imperial princesses.

"Madame Murat," says Madame de Rémusat, "did not fail to testify her extreme displeasure at this. She cordially hated the Princess Stéphanie and she could not dissemble her pride and jealousy." [1]

From this arrangement of etiquette Caroline's vanity suffered during the whole time the *fêtes* lasted.

[1] Madame de Rémusat, *Mémoires.*

Shortly after the departure of the princely couple for Baden vague rumours of war with Prussia circulated in Paris. Soon they took a more definite shape and the Emperor departed for the immortal campaign of Jena.

During his absence the Grand Duchess of Berg reigned veritably in the capital. "In Paris," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "there was only one will, and that was in the head of a woman!" It is needless to add that this head belonged to the Grand Duchess of Berg, and with its white brow and rosy cheeks it plotted many dark schemes, whilst the French Army marched from triumph to triumph, and the Prussian fortresses fell before Napoleon's regiments of Hussars. When Murat at the head of the advance guard of the French Army entered Warsaw towards the end of November, his wife held the thread of many intrigues, great and small.

The Emperor had left word that during his absence festivities should continue as if he were still in Paris. Caroline had no need to have this wish of her brother's expressed twice. Balls and parties served her secret aims too well for her not to give as many as possible. These balls were, perhaps, less brilliant than those of the preceding year because a host of young officers, especially those on the staffs of the Prince of Neufchâtel and other marshals, were in Prussia or Poland. But the Grand Duchess managed all the same to make them "go."

The aides-de-camp of the Military Governor of Paris, the whole of the staff of the fortress, the officers of the *dépôts* of the Imperial Guard and



JUNOT, DUC D'ABRANTÈS

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those of some regiments that remained in Paris, took the place of the dancers who were at the front. It was now that people noticed that General Junot, who had resumed the military governorship of Paris, was always the partner of the Duchess of Berg when she opened the ball at the Elysée or at the Tuileries. This was, of course, quite as it should be, for the Governor of Paris occupied the highest military position in France after the Minister of War. But it was also noticed that if the princess sought amusement or relaxation of any kind, it was always in his company. This naturally caused scandal. Attention being drawn to them, it was observed that General Junot spent every evening at the princess's and was scarcely seen in his own house. His livery (it was, in fact, that of his household)—purple velvet edged with yellow and silver—was to be seen till a very late hour of the night in the courtyard of the Elysée Palace. Caroline, too, it was remarked, went to a great hunt in the park of the Château de Raincy, Junot's estate. So it soon came to be gossiped everywhere that, *ennuyée* at the absence of her husband, Murat's wife had taken a lover, and that he was none other than General Junot, the Governor of Paris.

It was, indeed, only too true. Junot had become the lover of the Grand Duchess of Berg.

Junot was a handsome officer, tall, fair, well-made, witty and reckless, just the one to fascinate a woman. But one may surmise, as will be seen, that it was not to his personal charms that he owed his conquest of the sister of the Emperor. If he had been unattractive it would have been the same.

Whilst love, with a bandage over its eyes as usual, was running its course at the Elysée, whilst scandal was equally busy in Paris, the Empress Josephine was plunged in serious meditation. It certainly required extraordinary circumstances to put her in such a state, for she was not prone to seriousness any more than she liked meditation. But she had got the idea in her head that it was possible the Emperor might be killed in the war, like the humblest of his soldiers, and then what would she do? Forgetting that in the event of so cruel a chance the best she could do would be to mourn his loss, to wear mourning to the day of her death for this wonderful man who had so passionately loved her, somewhat unworthy though she was of such a love, it pleased her to think that it would be very clever of her to cause the crown of France to pass to her son Eugène, contrary to the decree of the Senate by which the Emperor had settled the order of succession to the throne in the event of his dying childless. So, ruminating over this thought and wishing to make sure in advance of the assistance of the Governor of Paris, she invited him one day to lunch. During the meal Josephine, whom certain books have not hesitated to present as an ideal wife, as the model of all the virtues, dared to unburden herself to General Junot on the subject of her anxiety, or of her hopes.[1]

But Junot, whose devotion to the Emperor was fanatical, a veritable religion, surprised, displeased though he was, maintained a reserve. Repairing

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

later to the Elysée, he reflected on the proposition of the Empress, perhaps he even reflected on it again in the evening in the arms of Caroline—those arms as white as those Homer accorded Juno—but he would have been very much astonished if at that moment he had been told that his mistress, instead of thinking of him, was only thinking, like the Empress Josephine, of the death of Napoleon!

Love transformed into an instrument of ambition based on the expectation of death, of the death of a brother to whom one owes everything, and whose crown one wishes, exceeds in moral perversion all that one can imagine to be most revolting. Caroline realised, perhaps, the extent of the hypocrisy which characterised her adultery with Junot; but she did not stop at such trifles. It was all the same to her, provided she could assure herself of the success of her plans.

As for Junot, if he had guessed, simple soul, to what an odious intrigue he was unconsciously lending himself, he would have torn himself from the arms of his mistress and denounced her. For, if light and weak of character, if violent and passionate, like all weak men, Junot was nevertheless a man of honour. He would never have wished to look upon the Grand Duchess of Berg again. But there are certain calculations which by their criminal cunning escape the most penetrating perspicacity. Besides, was not Junot, being in love, blind?

The Princess Caroline was far too clever to speak plainly to him, like the Empress Josephine, of the subject she had so much at heart. But she, too, had thought of the possibility, and discounted the

death of the Emperor in this terrible Polish campaign, and she intended in this event to trick her brother Joseph of the throne for the benefit of Murat—that is, for her own benefit. For of what account was Murat in his family? Was not she the real head? But to succeed in her intrigues it was as necessary for her, as for the Empress, to make sure of the devotion of the Governor of Paris.

Junot, in fact, in case of the sudden death of the Emperor, could give the crown to any one he pleased. All the regiments within the military jurisdiction of Paris were at his disposal; the other garrisons in France could only submit to what was a *fait accompli*, as well as the army in general. The people in their turn would bow to the will of the army; they had no means of doing otherwise. This, then, was the reason why, since the proclamation of the Empire, the Princess Caroline had paid so much attention to the army and sought to win the esteem of the officers. Her ambition, at first vague and indefinite, had taken shape. It was, too, the reason why she gave parties to which she invited the officers of the garrison of Paris as well as the staff of the fortress; why she had gone to the camp at Boulogne under pretext of seeing her brother and husband; why she had feigned love for the husband of Laure Permon, and made him in his fatuous simplicity believe it was due entirely to his irresistible merit—why, in a word, she had become, as all Paris knew, the mistress of General Junot!

She was not such a fool as to let Junot into her secrets; but in the midst of the delights of her

boudoir she murmured in her lover's ears things that when the hour arrived would make Junot incapable of refusing her anything.

To effect the successful accomplishment of her purpose the Grand Duchess of Berg recoiled from nothing. The honour of her family, her honour as wife, her fair fame, morality, were of not the least account alongside of her shameless ambition. But it is very difficult to be at the same time a *femme galante* and a political *intrigante*. If the Princess Palatine, if Catherine II. knew how to be both, and steered clear of the dangers of love and politics like an experienced navigator among the reefs of certain dangerous coasts, others more clever than the Grand Duchess of Berg have been wrecked on them. But Caroline had a luck that her detestable intrigues did not deserve.

The Emperor was informed of her *liaison* with Junot, but he was not told—from ignorance or from reserve—the secret motive of it. Junot was a good-looking young man, and Napoleon, aware, whatever one may say, that the demands of his sisters' temperaments were as exacting as their morals were lax, simply fancied that Caroline had *distinguished* the Governor of Paris to amuse herself during her husband's absence. He, perhaps, even congratulated himself that her choice had fallen on Junot rather than on any other. But he did not perceive the odious villainy of her secret motive, till Caroline took upon herself to enlighten him and even to make a merit of it.

Napoleon had scarcely returned to Paris after the

Peace of Tilsit when he received a visit from his sister. He greeted her coldly, and gave her to understand that he knew many things concerning her conduct in spite of efforts to keep them from him. Caroline was fully prepared for every charge. She let the first attack pass before replying to it; then, with a skill that was only equalled by her cunning, she proved to her brother that she was after all not so very culpable. For why? Had she thought of the possibility of her brother being killed by a bullet? Well, it was hardly he, Napoleon, who could blame her for having thought of preserving for the Bonapartes a throne which, by his genius, had become a family heirloom; besides, she had done nothing to injure his power—on the contrary. . . . And then, frankly, was she not more capable of governing a country than Joseph? Certainly people had gossiped—in her situation she had many enemies—about the numerous visits General Junot had paid her. But how could she refuse to receive him, when he came to inform her of the state of the capital, of the effervescence that was manifested after the bloody battle of Eylau, and to concert with her measures for maintaining order in Paris? If there had been anything between her and the General, would she have been so foolish as to publish it? Her flattery and customary wiles succeeded in appeasing the wrath of the Emperor. But it is curious to note that from this day Napoleon conceived a higher idea of his sister's capacity and that it was to this intrigue that she owed in part her elevation to the throne of Naples.

Junot also came to congratulate Napoleon on his safe return after his glorious campaign and a peace more glorious still. But Napoleon froze him. The unlucky Governor of Paris, not knowing that the Emperor had been informed of his intrigue with Caroline, requested an audience and obtained it. He professed his respect and absolute devotion to the Emperor, and ended by saying that Napoleon's mistrust had caused him deep pain.

"I wish to believe all you tell me," replied the Emperor, "but you have none the less been guilty of imprudence, and imprudence in your position and that of my sister is a fault, if not worse. What, for example, is the meaning of this behaviour? Why does the Grand Duchess of Berg sit in your box at the theatre? Why does she drive in your carriage? Ah! you are astonished, M. Junot, that I am so well acquainted with your affairs and those of that little fool Madame Murat."

Junot was overwhelmed. The reckless fellow had not foreseen any of the consequences of his adventure.

"Yes," continued the Emperor, "yes, I know this, and many other things too which I wish only to consider as imprudences, but which are none the less grave errors on your part. Again, why this carriage with your livery? Your livery should not be seen at two in the morning in the courtyard of the Grand Duchess of Berg! Oh! Junot, for you to compromise my sister!"

And Napoleon, overwhelmed, sank into a chair.

Junot then offered to give satisfaction to the Grand Duke of Berg, if he considered himself wronged.

"My hotel," he said, "is quite near the Elysée and——"

"Yes, yes," said the Emperor, "much too near!" And he formally forbade Junot to fight Murat whom he had wronged, or with Savary who had denounced him, and he would not let him go till he had promised on his honour to remain quiet.[1]

A duel with Murat, in the opinion of the public, would have confirmed the rumours which were in circulation; while if he fought Savary, Junot, who was as expert with a pistol as with a sword, would certainly in his rage have deprived the Emperor, who did not want to lose him, of his Jack-of-all-trades, as Taine has called him. He had not yet learnt that this species of man is not rare.

Junot's disgrace, though mitigated at first, was complete. The Emperor sent him to Portugal to command the army of invasion that was known as "the Corps of Observation of the Gironde," because it assembled at Bordeaux and at Bayonne. Henceforth the Spanish peninsula became the place of exile of the admirers, devoted or recalcitrant, of the virtuous Imperial princesses. Canouville and Septeuil, like Junot, learnt it later to their cost.

As the result of the fancy, at once ambitious and amorous, of the Grand Duchess of Berg, Junot lost Portugal by his incapacity and ignorance. Neither Soult nor Massena, each of whom later commanded an expedition against this country, could set foot in Lisbon, where Junot had arrived, owing to his imprudence and to the unpreparedness of the

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

Portuguese, who were not yet organised or assisted by the English.

In the life of nations as in that of men one thing is linked to another from beginning to end. Caroline, it cannot be too strongly emphasised, was the original cause of the disasters of the Empire, as she was also the last and determining cause. If she had been an honest wife, she would not have had an intrigue with Junot, and Napoleon would not have removed him from the military governorship of Paris. He would have sent to Portugal a capable general and not this "sub-lieutenant of hussars," as Thiébault justly terms him. Another general would not have lost the battle of Vimeiro, but would, on the contrary, have annihilated the English army; consequently there would not have been a Convention of Cintra and an evacuation of Portugal, for the English would hardly have sent a second expedition to this country. When it was necessary to retake it the Portuguese were organised, accustomed to fighting, their numbers increased, and they were formidably entrenched. The English, in fine, had found a battlefield in Europe on which to fight the French. The peasants were in arms and massacred the stragglers and the isolated; moreover, the Spaniards rose in the rear of the French, and the army invading Portugal had neither a base of operations nor communication with France.

The Emperor, the most reliable historians assert, lost about three hundred thousand men in this war with Spain, and it must not be forgotten that the general rising of Spain would not have occurred if Portugal had not been evacuated. These losses,

independently of the army corps it was necessary to maintain in the Peninsula, prevented the Emperor from being in a condition to face coalised Europe with troops sufficient in point of numbers and military training. It is not, therefore, rash to affirm that Caroline was the first cause of the shaking of the power of the colossus. She likewise, as will be seen, gave him the last blow, and contributed more powerfully than anybody to his fall by betraying him in a manner that words are incapable of expressing.

VI

TOWARDS the latter part of February, 1808, Murat went to Spain. It was not without regret that he left Paris. In his farewell audience with Napoleon, no mention was made of the mission on which he was being sent. He was obliged to leave the same evening and wait at Bayonne for instructions. This occasioned him a certain anxiety. He had, moreover, thanks to his wife, who forced him to go into society, acquired the manners and morals of the courtiers of the *ancien régime*—perhaps, like other members of the Imperial family, he believed them necessary to the prestige of his rank as Grand Duke of Berg. At all events, he found it disagreeable to leave Paris on this occasion. He had, however, one consolation: Junot was in Portugal.

As for the Grand Duchess, she scarcely gave a thought to Junot. Having no longer any need of him she let him go. But she continued to watch events. She saw the clouds darkening the Spanish horizon, and her ambition prepared to profit by whatever favourable circumstances should present themselves. Like a spider waiting for flies to fall into its web, Caroline was on the look out at the Elysée for some crown to fall into her lap.

Murat, who, without possessing the wit of a Rivarol, nevertheless did not lack a certain *finesse*, was like his wife on the watch. He desired a throne as Sancho Panza desired a governorship. In the mysterious march of events he soon perceived that the Emperor wished to dethrone the Spanish Bourbons. He took the liberty of asking him this; in the hope, after having failed to obtain either the crown of Westphalia or that of Poland, and after having even had the idea of turning Switzerland into a kingdom of which he should be the sovereign, that the Emperor was reserving for him the throne of Spain. But his terrible brother-in-law, in reply, told him sharply to march like a soldier and to look after his troops. "The rest," he added, "does not concern you, and if I tell you nothing, it is because you should know nothing."

Murat, very upset, considered himself answered; but he none the less continued to hope. It was evident to him that Napoleon intended to deprive the Bourbons of the throne of Spain, in order to give it to some member of his family. As all the brothers of Napoleon, except Lucien, whose intractable nature would not let him agree with the policy of the family, were provided with thrones, for whom was the throne of Spain intended, if not for Murat? So he did his best to assist Napoleon, thinking that he was working for his own elevation.

What, then, was his chagrin when General Savary brought him the following letter from the Emperor. "I intend," it read, "the King of Naples to reign at Madrid. I wish to give you the kingdom of Naples or that of Portugal. Reply immediately



MURAT, KING OF NAPLES
[After Gérard]

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what you think of it, for it is necessary that this should be done in a day. . . ."

Napoleon would doubtless have done better, since he had involved himself in this unjust Spanish business, to have left his brother Joseph at Naples and given Spain to Murat. His extravagant uniforms, his plumes, his grand airs, would have pleased Madrid; while his energy and experience of war would rapidly have stifled all attempts at resistance. One knows with what vigour he suppressed the revolt in Madrid on May 2nd. If he had been on the Spanish throne, the insurrections in the provinces would never have had time to become serious. But in giving Naples instead of Spain to Murat the Emperor perhaps recalled the insensate resistance he had made to his orders when he asked him to cede the town of Wesel, and consequently was reluctant to trust to such a man a morsel so important as Spain. Be this as it may, Murat's feelings were so grievously wounded that he was taken seriously ill. To recuperate the doctors sent him to take the waters at Barège.

The disappointment of the Grand Duchess of Berg, "who found the crown of Naples too small for her head," was also very great. It did not, however, make her ill, and she concealed the dissatisfaction of herself and Murat from the Emperor. The latter having written to Murat as if he were a sulky child, the new king at last resolved to go and take possession of his kingdom. He styled himself Joachim Napoleon, King of Naples and the Two Sicilies. His subjects numbered over six millions. By the Treaty of

Bayonne, he relinquished the state and private property that he possessed in France, the Elysée, the Artois Mews, Neuilly, &c. In exchange it was stipulated that he should receive property situated in the Papal States, the estates of the Farnese family, as well as 500,000 francs revenue from the kingdom of Naples.

At Naples a constitutional statute was read at the Ministerial council, by which the Emperor ceded to the Grand Duke of Berg the kingdom of Naples and regulated the succession in the order of primogeniture, but with remarkable arrangement. The Queen of Naples, Caroline, was to mount the throne and govern in her own name if she survived her husband and her male children. Her ambitious foresight had obtained from the Emperor, without difficulty, the addition of this article to the statute.

By dint of intrigues and solicitations, by dint also of importunities, Caroline had at last obtained from her brother what she most desired in the world—a crown! It was her importunities which caused Napoleon one day to say, "With Madame Murat I must always be prepared for battle."[1] But although Caroline expected to have a larger kingdom than her brother had given her, she was happy beyond measure to learn that she was at last a queen! "Knowing her as I know her," says Madame d'Abrantès, "I am certain that the joy she experienced made her mad for several hours."[2]

[1] Comte Roederer, *Œuvres.*

[2] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

Before the new Queen of Naples left Paris it was rumoured that King Joseph had carried to Spain the finest pictures in the Farnese Gallery, as well as the most precious works of art in the museum and the furniture of the palace in Naples. General Mathieu Dumas, who had taken an inventory of all the artistic treasures that remained in the royal palace, on his arrival in Paris went to the Elysée to give Caroline this inventory, a duplicate of which he had left with the intendant.

Highly praising her brother Joseph for not having carried away the palace at Naples itself, Queen Caroline set herself to imitate him. For, doubtless fearing that she would not find at Naples enough furniture to embellish the vast rooms of her palace, nor enough pictures to ornament the walls, the Queen, before leaving the Elysée, had everything she thought necessary for her comfort packed up to take with her. M. Lefuel, the official who had the care of the Imperial palaces, hearing of this, came respectfully to protest. But the Queen merely sent him word that she could not receive him for ten days, as she was too busy arranging a crowd of things before departing. M. Lefuel very discreetly waited a fortnight before returning, when he found the courtyard of the Elysée encumbered with packing-cases that were being rapidly stowed into travelling wagons. He entered, and found the palace empty! whereupon he hastened to demand an explanation of the intendant.

"The Queen of Naples," replied the latter, "gave orders that everything should be packed up. What could I do?"

"But I am responsible!" exclaimed M. Lefuel.

"Well," returned the other, "make a note of all the furniture and works of art that are missing from the inventory you have in your hand and send it to the Minister."[1]

This the unfortunate official did, but naturally no notice was taken of his report. The Emperor did not wish that it should be known in Paris that in departing for Naples his sister had carried off the national property in the palace of the Elysée. Had a concierge taken the smallest article he would have been sent to prison, but the words of the poet are eternally true:—

"*Selon que vous serez puissant ou misérable,*
Les jugements des hommes vous feront blanc ou noir."

Never did the treasures the Queen had so adroitly carried away return to France. King Ferdinand, on returning to Naples after the departure of Murat, found them in his palace. He considered them as compensation for his exile, and he, at least, had the good taste to leave everything as he found it![2]

[1] Général Mathieu Dumas, *Souvenirs*.

[2] "We have been to visit the Palazzo Portici," wrote M. de Castellane in 1825. "It was astonishing to find there the portraits of Napoleon and Murat. Pictures of the Bonapartes were everywhere. Nothing has been changed since their time."

VII

BEFORE leaving for Naples, Murat was obliged to renounce, by order of the Emperor, the Grand Duchy of Berg, which was reserved for the eldest son of Hortense and Louis. Napoleon had, moreover, stipulated that the property the new sovereign possessed in France should revert to the Imperial crown. It has just been seen how Caroline, scorning the most elementary honesty, had evaded the clause in the Treaty of Bayonne concerning the property of the State. Murat was not so clever as to be able to save the Hôtel Thélusson, which he wished to keep, but he nevertheless got paid for it. If a report that was current at St. Petersburg related by Joseph de Maistre is to be credited, Napoleon wished to acquire this hôtel for the Russian Embassy in Paris. He said to Murat:—

"How much is your hôtel in the Rue Cérutti worth?"

"Four hundred thousand francs," was the reply.

"I do not mean the four walls, but the hôtel and all it contains—furniture, plate, everything."

"Then, sire, it is a million."

"Well, here is a voucher for a million. Estève will pay you. The hôtel is mine. I am going to make it that of the Russian Ambassador."

Murat made a triumphal entry into Naples. To show his confidence in his new subjects he came, however, without an escort, accompanied by a single aide-de-camp, M. Paul de la Vauguyon. This mark of confidence excited the liveliest joy in the Neapolitans, who are ever ready to be enthusiastic over any novelty. They had, besides, been predisposed in favour of Murat by an emphatic proclamation, and his swagger, his martial air, his handsome presence had done the rest. Independently of the enthusiasm of the moment, he pleased the people personally.

Queen Caroline arrived some time later, and was equally well received. She *wished* to please, and she succeeded completely. Never were a royal pair so frankly popular. A *Te Deum* was solemnly celebrated, salvoes of artillery were fired, and the bells replied joyously to the majestic roar of the cannon. At night the whole city was illuminated.

The palace of the new sovereigns was charmingly situated. From the windows of Caroline's bedroom the whole Bay of Naples could be seen, with its marvellous, ever-varying perspective, environed in a manner not to be rivalled in the world—Pausilippo unrolling itself in flowery terraces, with its green avenues, its grotto, and that charm which falls upon one on arriving at Naples, and makes one exclaim that the only thing left to desire in the world is to spend the rest of one's days here. In her boudoir the Queen displayed great splendour, enhanced by veritable good taste. She had had it upholstered entirely in white satin, and the soft folds of this

material harmonised admirably with the lilies and roses of her complexion. She liked this boudoir so much that it pleased her to receive in it, as she had done at the Elysée in Paris, every one who might be presented to her unofficially, for with Caroline there were times when she sank the queen in the woman.

The court of the Queen of Naples was not at first mounted on too grand a scale. Caroline only added six maids-of-honour to her princely household in Paris. With this retinue she reigned in a manner that should have contented the highest ambition; but hers was not satisfied any more than in the past. It was repugnant to her to share power with her husband; she wished to possess it all herself. Was not Elisa a sovereign for good and all, though she had only the title of Grand Duchess of Tuscany, and not that of Queen? Was her husband anything else but her first subject? Why, then, should she, Caroline, whose ability was incomparably superior to her sister's, only be the wife of a king? It was indeed humiliating!

So she managed to take part in the government, a part that she immediately made as important as possible, pretending from the time of her arrival at Naples that she had the right to a place in the Council, and a voice in its deliberations. But Murat, weak though he was before his wife, was as zealous of preserving his royal prerogatives as his wife was of depriving him of them, and this was the cause of many a difference between the couple.

At all events, and in view of certain chances that

the future perhaps might hold for her in its mysterious designs, Queen Caroline sought to create a party at Naples, as she had done at Paris. This time it was to counterbalance the power of Murat. She effected a reconciliation with a former friend, and afterwards enemy, of the Bonaparte family, Salicetti, who, in spite of his depredations in Italy when he had been a commissioner of the Directory, had still a certain influence. But Salicetti, who had at first responded to the advances of the Queen, drew back, seeing her surrounded with people who were not to his fancy, namely, M. de Montrond and M. de la Vauguyon. He told Murat that "he could have nothing to do with such fops."[1]

On his part, Murat perceived that his wife was encroaching more and more on his prerogatives. This annoyed him, and, though he always loved Caroline, who had now quite ceased to love him, there were several "scenes" between them, which left them in that undetermined state that is neither open warfare nor peace, but rather an armed peace—a state common to a great number of establishments that are not princely.

These private skirmishes in the royal household rapidly and naturally led to the formation of two parties at court, the King's and the Queen's, whence arose an incalculable number of idle rumours and intrigues, which made this court very slippery ground for the newcomer, who could only venture on it with the greatest caution.

[1] *Mémoires d'une inconnue.*

VIII

WHEN the war with Austria, marked by the brilliant affairs of Ratisbon and Eckmühl, by the bloody battle of Essling, and the hard-won victory of Wagram, was over and peace had been signed, Napoleon returned to Paris resolved at last to divorce Josephine. He had been exposed to many dangers during this last campaign. At Ratisbon he had been wounded in the foot, and people had said, "If the ball had struck a metre higher!" At Schönbrunn he had escaped assassination, and they had said again, "If Rapp had not been there!" It was, therefore, urgent that Napoleon should secure his dynasty, so this time, as has been stated, he returned determined on divorce.

The Queen of Naples was summoned to Paris.

With what pleasure did Caroline, "whose soul was utterly incapable of a good sentiment," hasten to obey the Emperor's order! Her joy was so great that she refused to be detained by a blizzard. The state of the weather was such that it took her three days to cross the Alps. But the worst weather appears fine when one is happy, even when happiness is only the gratification of a contemptible passion.

The news of the Emperor's marriage with the

Archduchess Marie Louise excited the liveliest satisfaction throughout France. People hoped that this alliance with the House of Austria would put a stop to the interminable wars which for twenty years had exhausted the two countries. Having a high opinion of the ability of the Queen of Naples, the Emperor reserved a brilliant *rôle* for her in his marriage with the Archduchess. He sent her at the head of a court-in-waiting to Braunau, a town on the Austrian frontier, to receive his august *fiancée*.

Caroline, who was accustomed to carry everything with a high hand, and of whom the Emperor declared that "she was a man among his sisters," wished to direct the new Empress, as she did poor Murat. When she received Marie Louise at Braunau she took her timidity for weakness, and promised herself the pleasure of ruling her.

When the handing over of the young Archduchess had been effected, with all the ceremonial exacted by etiquette, Marie Louise dismissed her Austrian attendants, only retaining, as had been agreed, her mistress of the robes, Madame de Lajenski. This lady had brought her up, and she had never been separated from her. But the Queen of Naples, fearing that Madame de Lajenski would exercise over the young Empress whom she was proposing to govern an influence capable of counterbalancing hers, lent a favourable ear to the complaints that were made by the French ladies of the Empress's household. There had been conflicts over privileges more or less voluntarily provoked. So the Queen of Naples, wishing her rule to be undisputed, formally demanded of the



THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE

[*After Prud'hon*]

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Emperor that Madame de Lajenski should be sent back to Vienna. The Emperor gave the order, but from that day Marie Louise conceived for the author of this proceeding an aversion that never slackened.

"The worst of the behaviour of the Queen of Naples," says Madame Durand, a lady-in-waiting of Marie Louise, "was that after having exacted from the Empress her consent to the dismissal of Madame de Lajenski, she gave orders to her ladies to prevent the mistress of the robes, if she came to say farewell, from getting access to the Empress. But this order was not executed. For two of the ladies, offended by such harshness, let Madame de Lajenski in through a secret door. She spent two hours with her pupil, and in spite of Caroline's reproaches that their conduct drew upon them, the ladies were never sorry for what they had done!" [1]

As at the coronation in 1804, the sisters of Napoleon were designated by the Emperor to carry the train of the Empress during the marriage ceremony. They had, however, haughtily expressed their disgust at being compelled to perform a duty which they regarded as a humiliation. It made no difference to them that the new Empress was an Archduchess of Austria; in their eyes she was merely their brother's wife, and therefore they were her equals. What! compromise their dignity by stooping to carry the train of their sister-in-law! Lower themselves from the supreme rank to which their brains had raised them! Besides, were they not Bonapartes, and could

[1] Madame la Générale Durand, *Mémoires.*

a Bonaparte ever fill a subordinate position? Never, on your life!

These discussions, in which the Imperial princesses forgot so thoroughly him to whom they owed their fortune, ended in a downright refusal to conform to the exigencies of etiquette and obey the Emperor. It was at Madame Mère's that this conspiracy of wounded self-love was formed. The *Signora madre* did not approve of the order of Napoleon (one is very sensitive in such matters in Corsica), but she strongly recommended her daughters to submit. She even took it upon herself to speak strongly to them, especially to Caroline, who, as a reigning sovereign, had flown into a violent passion at the idea of compromising the majesty of her crown by performing such a menial task.

"My daughters and daughters-in-law," she said to them haughtily, "mark well that the Emperor is accustomed to be obeyed. He is wrong in this instance, perhaps, but if he persists, you must obey."[1]

Napoleon, entering at this moment, heard these imperious words. He understood everything, and, without asking for a single word of explanation, he gave his mother a glance of thanks and then duly and firmly brought the pretty rebels to heel.

[1] Baron Larrey, *Madame Mère.*

IX

BEFORE returning to her dominions, the Queen of Naples wished to give a dinner for the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantès. Murat would very readily have dispensed with entertaining the former Governor of Paris, whose *liaison* with his wife had not been unknown to him. But Caroline with time had taught him to become philosophical about such things. Madame Junot, on her side, was obliged to hide every trace of jealousy, if not of *amour-propre*, on finding herself at the table of one who had deprived her of her husband. Like Murat, in respect to his wife, she had finished by following his example and consoling herself elsewhere.[1]

But though the King of Naples would have willingly avoided this *tête-à-tête* with the Junots, he was obliged to bend to the will of his wife, whom he feared as much as the Emperor, perhaps more. For as General Rapp said of Murat, "for all his bravery, he had no more heart than a chicken when in the presence of Napoleon."[2] The dinner, however, passed off well, though there were present only the Murats and the Junots, four in all. The con-

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

[2] Bourrienne, *Mémoires.*

versation turned on the Bourbon royal family of Naples, now exiled in Sicily; and Caroline was very severe on the conduct of her predecessor on the Neapolitan throne, who bore the same name as herself—the sister of Marie Antoinette and the wife of King Ferdinand. She would not forgive her for faults which she so indulgently ignored in herself. Once or twice Murat attempted to mitigate the hard things his wife said of the royal exiles; but with an imperious glance, a harsh word, the Queen of Naples imposed silence on her husband, who, whip in hand, twenty-five paces in front of his squadrons, had charged without flinching the finest cavalry in Europe![1]

On their return to their capital there was scarcely any harmony between them. Like the majority of women, the Queen encroached as much as she could on the functions and prerogatives of her husband, meddling in the business of the Government, expressing her opinion, and imposing her will on one and all. Like weak men, Murat would become violently angry and swear that he would never bow to the caprices of a woman; but either from fear, or a remnant of affection, or fatigue and horror of domestic broils, that is to say, from weakness, he always yielded in the end. The Queen knew this, and like an imperious mistress abused this weakness and good nature, never leaving her husband in peace till he had capitulated. It was in vain that Murat was ashamed of himself and his lack of character; he never succeeded in shaking off the yoke and regaining his freedom of action. Like all men ruled by

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

women, he boasted that he was not the sort of man to be under the thumb of a woman—that he was no Baciocchi. But these were only words; his wife had but to appear, and in a haughty or coaxing tone, according to circumstances, tell him to sign an appointment or a decree, and the unfortunate man would obey.

But if his heart became indifferent, his self-respect as a man, his majesty as a king, were deeply wounded. Among the French who had entered into his service when he ascended the throne of Naples was the Duc de la Vauguyon. He was a handsome young fellow, tall, slim, well made, with the refined manners of the old *régime*—those manners which Murat liked so much that he studied to acquire them himself. This Duc de la Vauguyon was the son of the former governor of the Dauphin, who was afterwards Louis XVI. Murat had appointed him colonel-in-chief of his guard, and his handsome presence and distinguished manners had attracted the attention of the Queen. In a short time he was her lover. Murat was aware of this *liaison* of his wife's, or at all events he suspected it.[1]

One day, while de la Vauguyon was composing poetry with the Queen and admiring with her the wonderful panorama of the Bay of Naples, with its blue water dotted with the white and brick-red sails of the fishing-boats and feluccas, his valet came to tell him that the King wanted him at once. He immediately left the Queen, slipping through a secret door into a corridor which led to his own apartment. But at this moment Murat, approaching from the

[1] *Mémoires d'une inconnue.*

other end of the corridor, met him. He was pale and agitated. Had he been informed of the *tête-à-tête* between the Queen and the young duke, or had he only a presentiment of treachery? It is impossible to say. But, springing upon the colonel of his guard and seizing him by the coat, he said in a trembling voice—

"Where are you coming from?"

"I cannot tell your Majesty."

"I will know!" insisted Murat furiously.

De la Vauguyon remained silent.

"Ah well, I know!" added the King, stamping with his foot.

"No, sire," replied de la Vauguyon, "you do not know, and you shall never know."

The duke's silence was worthy of praise if his conduct was not; but since he desired to save the honour of his mistress he would have done better to reply differently. A lie in his mouth, since there was one already in his conduct, would not have increased his disloyalty. As it was, his replies only confirmed the suspicions of the outraged husband.

Poor Murat could have strangled with his own hands this man who had abused the generous hospitality he had received to seduce his wife, or at least to allow himself to be seduced by her. To play the *rôle* of a Joseph to a Madame Potiphar is not easy, and apart from the ridicule it creates, there was in the present instance the danger of incurring the resentment of the vindictive Queen. But gratitude to Murat should have compelled M. de la Vauguyon all the same to repel the advances of Caroline. There

were, however, extenuating circumstances. As all the world knew, he was neither her first nor her only lover. Murat doubtless called this to mind, for he let go the coat of the young man, smote his brow with a gesture of despair, and turning round, went back to his apartment.

Relating his meeting with the King a little while later to Caroline, de la Vauguyon told her all the remorse he had suffered at the moment. He told her that he had reflected on the baseness of his conduct to Murat, to whom he owed rank, honours, wealth—Murat, whom he loved, for whom he would have joyfully shed his last drop of blood, and blaming himself for his treachery now that his sense of duty had overcome his weakness, the noble fellow was revolted to see that the Queen found nothing odious in her own conduct.

"She did not understand," he related later, "that the dramatic situation of this scene was entirely in the perfidy of which we two were guilty."

Indeed, after the first forgetfulness of duty, one glides very easily down the slope of dishonour and crime. It is very difficult to fix the limits to one's weakness and say, "I will not go further." Caroline never attempted to restrain her passions; she had lost all moral sense, and she slid down the ladder of crime to the last rung, as will be seen.

As for de la Vauguyon, such cynicism revolted him, and he had just made up his mind to break formally with her when Murat disgraced him, and forbade him to remain in his dominions.

This episode did not contribute to the revival of harmony in the royal establishment. Caroline merely shrugged her shoulders and continued to act according to her caprices, only telling herself that it would perhaps be better to have a little greater regard for appearances. In spite, however, of this fine resolution, it was not long before she gave Naples a fresh scandal to talk of, one that attracted much more attention than that in which de la Vauguyon was concerned.

There had come to Naples a very big, fat, restless, self-satisfied individual, who had appeared more self-satisfied than ever after a long call at the royal palace, whither he had gone immediately on his arrival. This person was Daure, the former Commissary-General of the Masséna Division during the Italian campaign of 1796–1797, as well as of the Army of Egypt. A very brave man, he had accompanied Napoleon when he visited the plague-stricken soldiers in the hospitals at Jaffa, which had earned him a special claim to the goodwill of Bonaparte. He was clever and energetic. But though belonging to a distinguished family in the South of France and related to the most influential people in that part of the country, he had adopted during the Revolution the vulgar manners of the people and a freedom that, without his being aware of it, did him a great deal of harm. At the time of the Italian campaign of 1796 his eccentricities were the talk of the army.

"Big, beardless fellow," wrote an officer who knew him well at this period, "very droll, a *farceur* in every sense of the term, he envied nobody anything.

He was, too, very brave, intelligent, and able. I cannot recall him without hearing him again singing filthy songs in the most serious manner, or seeing him, as I did one night, when a lot of us had assembled for a hunt, walking about his room stark naked, and carrying on his shoulders a bag full of gold." [1]

General Thiébault, who thus describes Daure in his valuable and interesting Memoirs gives also an instance of his astonishingly free-and-easy manner. The episode occurred at the same period and at the house of the Countess of Papa-Fava, a lady of distinction, noted for the stiffness of her *salon*.

" One evening," relates General Thiébault, " when Daure and I were present and conversation languished rather more than usual, he suddenly turned with his chair so as to face the wall and, all eyes being fixed on him in amazement, began to yawn so loud that he was heard in the street. Then, his extraordinary yawning fit over, he rose and, without venturing a bow that would not have been returned, and leaving his chair with its back to the company, continued to yawn with all his might as he crossed the room, went down the stairs, and left the house. Everybody was dumfounded." [2]

In truth there was reason. One would have said that Daure had sworn to dumfound everybody who did him the honour to entertain him in Italy. One more anecdote, likewise related by Thiébault, will complete the portrait of this singular individual, or rather, of this clod, who stopped at nothing to satisfy

[1] Général Baron Thiébault, *Mémoires*.

[2] Ibid.

his taste for extravagant and far too democratic amusements.

"Daure had conceived the joke of taking with him to the Princess Chigi's and presenting to her at the same time, without asking her permission, without stopping to take breath, and in the most serious manner, six persons in this fashion: 'Princess, I have the honour of presenting to you Monsieur A——, my friend; Princess, I have the honour of presenting to you Monsieur B——, the friend of my friend; Princess, I have the honour of presenting to you Monsieur F——, the friend of the friend of the friend of the friend of my friend." [1]

One may imagine that after such instances of unconventionality Daure was not very popular in Italy. But when he came to Naples in 1811 he had been forgotten, whilst in France his name had just acquired unpleasant notoriety in connection with some unfortunate money affair in which as paymaster-general he was implicated. It was, indeed, to let the wind of this scandal blow over in France that he had come to Murat. Welcomed by the two sovereigns, to whom he had been strongly recommended, his lively and daring wit made a favourable impression on Caroline, thanks to whom he was soon made Minister of War and of the Navy. To this post he added that of lover of the Queen, and this almost the day after his arrival in Naples and without mystifying anybody, unless it was the King. Poor Murat, who had suspected the *liaison* of his wife and M. de la Vauguyon, had no idea of this. The ugli-

[1] Général Baron Thiébault, *Mémoires.*

ness and obesity of the minister sheltered him from all suspicion. The scales, however, fell from Murat's eyes by degrees, and the unhappy man perceived to a certain extent all the shameful intrigues with which he was surrounded. He perceived that Caroline wished to be rid of her husband in some way or other, and to rule alone! He perceived that in her arms, or in her hands, if you prefer, Daure was only an instrument, as Junot had been!

In this extremity, Murat was incapable of energy. As it always is with feeble natures, he did not dare face the situation and strike at the root of the evil. From a remnant of affection and weakness he was afraid to take the bull by the horns. So he chose the roundabout course of obliging by decree all Frenchmen in his service to become naturalised Neapolitans, and reserving for himself the privilege of refusing letters of naturalisation to such whom he wished to get rid of and who were friends of the Queen. The majority of these, knowing that they had provoked this measure, decided to leave, for they saw that Murat was resolved to get rid of them, and they feared lest he should have recourse to more violent means, the more so since they were aware that the Prefect of Police, Maghella, had discovered documents which compromised them. These in particular went the faster.[1]

Rid of them, Murat was seeking some device that would allow Frenchmen whom he did not wish to lose to remain at Naples without being naturalised, when he read in the *Moniteur de l'Empire Français* a

[1] *Mémoires d'une inconnue.*

fulminating decree of the Emperor, reminding him that his kingdom was a portion of the French Empire, and that he owed its conquest and possession to the blood of Frenchmen. This decree was worded as follows:—

"Considering that the Kingdom of Naples is a part of the Great Empire; that the Prince who reigns in this country has risen from the ranks of the French Army; that he has been placed on his throne by the efforts and the blood of Frenchmen, Napoleon declares that French citizens have the right to be also citizens of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies."

Murat was overwhelmed with shame and transported with rage on receiving so bitter a humiliation. Being, like all weak characters, very excitable, he became ill. On the advice of his doctors he went to Capo di Monte for a change of air, but he could not succeed in regaining his composure or dispelling his despair.

"To be betrayed thus by my wife, by everybody whom I have covered with benefits!" he said. "Oh, it is enough to make one mad!"

And, indeed, it was feared he would become so, for he had a raging fever, and Méneval relates that he had heard the Queen say that she had kept her husband for two days completely cut off from all intercourse, so that no one should perceive his mental aberration.[1]

Two Frenchmen, however, Dr. Péborde, a friend of the King, and Dr. Andral, a friend of the Queen, undertook to calm Murat. He refused at first to

[1] Méneval, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Napoléon* I^er^.

listen to them, and spoke of banishing Caroline to Castellamare. It would have been better for him to have done this and not spoken of it. Finally, assisted by M. Baudus, the tutor of Prince Achille (Murat's eldest son), they succeeded in persuading him to come to a thorough understanding with the Queen, as it was impossible for the situation to continue. Murat consented to this, and immediately after their reconciliation he sent his wife to Paris to make his peace with the Emperor.

X

THE two brothers-in-law were once more on good terms when, in the month of May, 1812, Napoleon summoned the King of Naples to the Grand Army to entrust to him the command of all his cavalry in the campaign which he was about to open. The departure of her husband for the war with Russia delighted Caroline, for during his absence she would be Regent and reign without interference. Perhaps, also, she thought—I had almost said hoped—that a bullet . . . Murat was so reckless! In this event she would ascend the throne, according to the constitution of the kingdom. Why should she not count on the death of her husband as she had done on that of her brother?

She signed decrees, granted and refused pardons, made appointments, and presided at Cabinet Councils. But woman, in spite of everything, she passed from a serious to a frivolous subject with astonishing facility, and talked of balls and chiffon as readily as of new measures for maintaining the Continental blockade. One day, while she was presiding at her Council, a lady-in-waiting came to notify her that an employé from Leroy's, the chief costumier of Paris, had just arrived with a great bale containing the

latest fashions. Seeing the importance of the event, the Queen immediately ordered the employé to be admitted to the Council with the bale. This was done, and dresses, hats, cloaks, and parasols were unpacked in the presence of the ministers, who admired everything, without forgetting the exceptional capacity of the Queen in directing the most serious political affairs and the most subtle questions of taste![1]

Everybody knows how disastrous the Russian campaign was, and how Napoleon, at the end of the retreat, abandoned the wreck of the army in order to return with all speed to Paris. The abortive conspiracy of General Malet caused him anxiety as to the solidity of the edifice he had constructed; his presence in the capital was necessary to reassure his subjects, to reassure himself, and to create fresh armies. In departing, he confided the chief command to his brother-in-law. But about this time Murat received alarming letters from his wife, summoning him to Naples. An English fleet, she said, was off the coast, and she feared a landing. Besides, other letters informed him of various independent actions of the Queen, whose thirst for power and pleasure was more insatiable than ever. Very uneasy both as king and husband, Murat, on January 16, 1813, informed the Prince de Wagram, major-general, and M. Daru, intendant-general, of his desire to return to Naples. They entreated him to remain in vain. But his jealousy and fears were this time roused to too high a pitch, and he set out, leaving the command to Prince Eugène.

[1] Bouchot, *La Toilette à la cour de Napoléon.*

Napoleon was furious when he learnt that his brother-in-law had deserted his post, and the *Moniteur* of February 8, 1813, contained observations that were very humiliating to the pride of the King of Naples. At the same time the Emperor wrote to Caroline: "The King of Naples has left the army. Your husband is very brave on the field of battle, but he is weaker than a woman or a monk when he does not see the enemy. He has no moral courage." Caroline was well aware of this; she was also aware that she was not unaccountable for it and that she took advantage of it. She knew, besides, that she was the cause of Murat's return, and she did not doubt also, though she took care not to mention it to the Emperor—which would have helped to excuse her husband's culpable conduct—that there were other motives that had influenced him to leave the army.

"One thing I can vouch for, because I possess the proofs," said the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "is that a conspiracy formed in the very bosom of his family was the sole cause of Murat's first blunders. It was an intrigue, and a very cunning one too, that caused him to leave Posen so hurriedly." [1]

The reader knows the first of these intrigues, but light has never been shed on the second. It is known that the Queen had written that an English fleet was off the coast and a landing imminent. Caroline did not doubt that this cry of alarm would make Murat hasten to the defence of his kingdom, and she flattered herself that when she got him at Naples under her influence she could make him do whatever she wished

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires.*

There do not exist any documents relating to this mysterious and secret part of the life of the Murats, and everything is but conjecture. Nevertheless, knowing the character of the King and Queen of Naples and the march of events, one may surmise the following from the silence, the reticence, and the deliberately false statements of the memoir writers.

Having learnt, like everybody else, by the bulletin of the 29th, of the loss of the Army of Russia, Caroline believed that the Emperor would never recover from so disastrous a blow, and that France would succumb with him. Forgetting her brother and her country, as she had forgotten her duties as a wife, she thought only of saving her crown in the general shipwreck that she foresaw. To this end she had entered into negotiations with Austria and England, counting on the gratitude of these two nations for the support she gave them. It was simple on her part, however, to hope to find gratitude in nations when it is found so rarely in men, and when she herself had manifested it so cavalierly in respect to her brother.

But Caroline, having opened negotiations in the hope of evicting her husband from his throne and usurping his crown, soon learnt that the Powers would only treat with Murat. Nor were her other calculations correct. Her intelligence, narrow for all the grandeur of her ambition, and because she was so egotistical that she could only judge others by herself, was unable to appreciate either the moral and material resources that France still possessed, or the indomitable genius of her brother. Napoleon made

another Grand Army spring from the earth, and snatched fresh favours from Fortune at Lutzen and at Bautzen.

These victories disconcerted Caroline. Was Napoleon once more going to triumph over the Coalition? Was he really the stronger? In that case it would be necessary to offer to reinforce him with her Neapolitans, though he seemed to be managing very well with his heroic conscripts. This was Caroline's cowardly policy, and, to the shame of mankind, it is that which has the most adherents, not only in the Cabinets of the Powers, but in the parties into which nations are divided as well as in the things that divide parties. The Queen of Naples, who knew from experience that the inexhaustible kindness of her brother forgave everything in his family, consequently intervened, and extolled the presence of Murat as indispensable to the Grand Army. He alone, she declared, in so difficult a situation as the present, was capable of leading young and inexperienced cavalry soldiers in the charges that decide victory. As she expected, Napoleon consented, and summoned his brother-in-law. Murat left Naples at once and rejoined Napoleon at Dresden on the 17th of August.

But Fortune had ceased to smile on Napoleon. The defeats of his lieutenants at Katzbach, at Gross-Beeren, at Dennewitz, at Kulm, were the prelude to the disastrous battle of Leipsic. Five days after this defeat, on leaving the tent of the Emperor, to whom he had certainly not mentioned his intention, Murat went to the camp of the Allies and caused himself to

be conducted to General Comte de Mier, formerly Austrian Ambassador at Naples, and a friend of the farseeing Caroline. This time Murat was a traitor. The lessons of his wife had finally corrupted him; he had become worthy of her.

Considering the affairs of Napoleon as henceforth irretrievably ruined, he had gone to inquire the Comte de Mier's proposals, who spoke as the representative of the Emperor of Austria, and perhaps also as that of the Queen of Naples. In any case, Murat resumed with him the negotiations previously opened, and showed himself disposed to accept the views of the Coalition. After having thus prepared for the future, after having thus momentarily saved his crown but definitely lost his honour, he returned to the French camp and took leave of the Emperor, telling him that since his presence in the army was useless during the retreat, it would be better for him to return to Naples to recruit soldiers and organise the defence.

Napoleon was probably informed of the interview that Murat had with Comte de Mier in the Austrian camp, for "the Minister of Police received by a special messenger the order if King Murat came to Paris to arrest him and shut him up in Vincennes."[1] But Murat, suspecting that his absence from the French camp had been noticed, was careful in returning to Italy to avoid setting foot on French soil by passing through Switzerland.

At Milan, forgetting the past, he sought out the Duc de la Vauguyon, who was living there in retire-

[1] Pasquier, *Mémoires.*

ment since his expulsion from the kingdom of Naples. The former colonel of his guard had a scheme for the regeneration of Italy reunited under the sceptre of Murat, a scheme that greatly appealed to the King of Naples. The possession of his kingdom having been guaranteed to him by the Emperor of Austria on the pledged honour of the Comte de Mier, he thought in the general upheaval that was imminent it might be possible to increase his dominions. He consequently effected a complete reconciliation with M. de la Vauguyon, accepted his services, and sent him to Rome to take the command of the Neapolitan troops which had just arrived there, and to seize the Papal States. Passing through Bologna, Vauguyon met Fouché, Duc d'Otrante, who cleverly led him to believe that he too dreamt of the regeneration of Italy under Murat. General Pino, of the Lombard Army, who was present, offered to deliver the fortress of Mantua, which he commanded, to Vauguyon, who should take possession of it in the name of the King of Naples. Vauguyon wished first to refer the matter to Murat, but the latter made no reply. He had returned to his capital, and had fallen more than ever under the influence of the Queen, who was waiting, before taking action, for something decisive to take place in France. If Murat had not become her accomplice, Caroline, in fact, henceforth inspired alone—and how ruinously!—the policy of the kingdom of Naples. Considering the Emperor already crushed, counting on her friends Mier and Metternich, in a word, on Austria, Queen Caroline calmly discounted in advance the ruin of

France, and hoped to profit on her own account by the victory of Austria and the Allies.[1]

The scheme for the emancipation and regeneration of Italy, proposed by Vauguyon, though it had, as has been said, fascinated Murat, was by no means pleasing to the Queen. She had done her best to make him abandon it, thoroughly convinced that Italy would never consider itself independent till it had got rid of the Murat dynasty. She insisted upon the alliance with Austria. This was not exactly her own idea; it had been suggested to her by Mier, when Austrian Ambassador at Naples, whom she had previously known in Paris, where he had been a secretary of the embassy when Metternich was ambassador.

Murat, however, would have preferred to accept the proposals of England. Admiral Bentinck, commander-in-chief of the British forces in the Mediterranean, had proposed to the Duc de la Vauguyon, as representative of the King of Naples, to recognise Murat in the name of England; and also undertook that he should be recognised by King Ferdinand, who should renounce his claims to Naples and remain in Sicily. England, moreover, promised to aggrandise Murat by the addition of Ancona, and offered him twenty millions to carry on the war and twenty-five thousand men.

But Caroline was obstinate in basing the security of her crown on Austria and Metternich, past experience of whom inspired her with confidence for the future. Mier, too, continually urged her to take

[1] Pasquier, *Mémoires.*

this course. The disagreement between her and Murat increased daily; the scenes between them were often so violent that their echo was heard beyond the walls of the palace. The scandal was known to all Naples. Caroline finally got her way, as usual, and Murat, renouncing all schemes for the independence of Italy, disavowing the negotiations opened with Vauguyon and Admiral Bentinck, signed on January 11, 1814, a treaty with Austria, which guaranteed to him and his heirs the free and peaceful sovereignty of all the territory he possessed in Italy, as the price of his treason. While in return, Murat bound himself to co-operate with all his might in the war against Napoleon and France, "with the object of re-establishing the balance of power and of securing a real and lasting peace in Europe, and particularly in Italy." To this end he promised to furnish thirty thousand men, Austria, on its side, sending sixty thousand into Italy.

Whilst Murat, pricked by conscience, was hesitating between his duty to France and the Emperor on the one hand and what he believed to be his interest and the objurgations of his wife on the other, Naples was profoundly stirred. The King's conduct and the report of an alliance with Austria, circulated by those who desired it—probably the Queen's agents—were everywhere eagerly discussed. Deeply moved by the persistency of the report, old Marshal Pérignon, who happened to be at Naples, went to the palace to demand a private interview of the King. Murat received him, but the Queen was with him. Suspecting the object of the honest Marshal, and

fearing lest he should succeed in influencing Murat, whose weakness of character she well knew, since it was she who had made him false to the most sacred duty, Caroline did not like to leave him at such a moment. Having informed them both, then, of the rumours that were being circulated, the Marshal added :—

"Tell me, sire, that these rumours are false."

As Murat replied evasively, Pérignon turned to the Queen.

"And you, Madame," he said, "you, the sister of the Emperor, if this fatal treaty is concluded in spite of you, as I do not doubt, you will of course leave Naples with the French Army; for it goes without saying that the sister of Napoleon will not remain here in the midst of his enemies, but will protest by her departure against any alliance with them, if she has been unable to prevent it." [1]

With a constrained smile, which ill-disguised her hypocrisy, the Queen replied :—

"M. le Maréchal, you forget the duty of a wife is to obey her husband."

The loyal old soldier understood and withdrew. What was the use of speaking further of duty, of honour, of patriotism, to this wretched woman, who brazenly made a jest of her infamy?

But Murat did not yield to the inflexible tenacity of his wife without a struggle. The day on which he capitulated, Madame Récamier, who had been warmly welcomed by the King and Queen on arriving in Naples early in December, 1813, was a witness of

[1] *Mémoires d'une inconnue.*

the scene that passed between the pair—a scene in which Murat, overcome with remorse, confessed that he was a traitor. He was still noticeably agitated when he and the Queen drove through the principal streets of their capital to show themselves to the people, who had heard, so quickly did Caroline's agents spread the news, that the treaty of alliance with Austria had just been signed. But the acclamations with which they were greeted repaid Murat, who loved them, for his criminal treachery. The same evening the two sovereigns went to the Grand Theatre. Comte de Neipperg, the Austrian plenipotentiary, and Admiral Bentinck, the commander of the English squadron, were in the royal box, and shared the popularity of the King and Queen.

Two days later Murat left Naples to take command of his army, and appointed Caroline Regent during his absence.

XI

THE Emperor was not long in learning of Murat's treachery. He had expected it, however, from the tone of the letters he had been receiving from his brother-in-law. But when he was informed of it officially he exclaimed :—

"What! Murat, my brother-in-law, Murat, a traitor! Ah, you were right at Mayence; I should have sent Belliard to keep an eye upon him. I was well aware that Murat was a fool, but I thought he loved me. It is his wife who is the cause of his desertion. To think that Caroline, my own sister, should betray me!"[1]

From this it is clear that Napoleon was not deceived, and held his sister responsible for Murat's treachery. No longer preserving any illusions as to the sentiments of gratitude and affection of this sister, he, however, wished to try to recall her to a sense of honour and duty. He wrote to his brother Joseph :—

"Write to the Queen of Naples on her ingratitude, which nothing can justify, and which revolts even the Allies. Write her that as no battle has yet

[1] De Bausset, *Mémoires.*

been fought between the French and Neapolitan troops, all can still be arranged, but that there is not a moment to lose."[1]

And to Fouché, another traitor, of whose complicity in this treason he was not yet aware, he wrote:—

"The conduct of the King of Naples is infamous, while words are inadequate to express that of the Queen. I hope to live long enough to revenge France and myself for such an outrage and such frightful ingratitude."

But everything henceforth was useless; events followed their course. Caroline gave no longer a thought to anything save the pleasure of being Queen —of being it for ever! She ruled as Regent, she presided at the Ministerial Councils, she signed decrees, read reports, and did all those tiresome things which gave her so much satisfaction—in a word, she was happy!

Her relations with her family after this betrayal were very strained. Madame Mère, in particular, never fully forgave either her daughter or her son-in-law. After Napoleon's abdication at Fontainebleau, she went to Rome to wait till it was possible for her to join her son at Elba. "She did not wish," says the *Memorial*, "to have any connection with Murat or his wife, and though they made some overtures to her, she made no other reply than that she held traitors and treachery in horror. When she was in Rome, after the disasters of 1814, Murat hastened to send her from his stables at Naples eight very

[1] Méneval, *Mémoires*.



MADAME MÈRE

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fine horses. But Madame Mère refused to have them even mentioned to her. She likewise repelled the advances of her daughter Caroline, who did not cease to repeat that after all it was not her fault, as she counted for nothing, and had been unable to influence her husband. But the mother of Napoleon replied like Clytemnestra: "If you were unable to influence him, you should nevertheless have opposed him. But what opposition did you make? Has any blood been shed? It is only across your dead body that your husband should have smitten your brother, your benefactor, your master!"[1]

After Napoleon's abdication, Murat's position as King of Naples was not very secure. At the Congress of Vienna, Louis XVIII. was demanding through Caroline's former friend, Talleyrand, the recall of Ferdinand to the throne of Naples. Another friend of Caroline's, however, more intimate and more loyal, Metternich, did his best to dismiss this pretender.[2] But Murat, during all these negotiations, was on thorns. His wife, calmer, in vain preached tranquillity to him; Murat could not wait for events to disclose themselves. He entered into communication with

[1] *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène.*

[2] The Duc de Blacas, however, assured M. de Castellane that he had his troops in readiness in Dauphiné, before the departure from Elba, and, as the result of a secret treaty between Prince Metternich and himself (Blacas) to drive Murat from the throne of Naples, France was to furnish fifty thousand men for this purpose. (Maréchal de Castellane, *Journal.*)

Napoleon, and the Emperor gave him, if not his confidence, at least a sort of provisional friendship. Before leaving Elba, he requested the King of Naples to put a vessel at the disposal of his mother and his sister Pauline in which they might be conveyed in safety to France. Murat entrusted this commission to his wife, who towards the end of March sent to Porto-Ferrajo the *Joachim*, of seventy-four guns, and the frigate *Caroline*, to bring Madame Mère to Naples. Princess Borghese had gone on beforehand to Lucca to her sister Elisa, but, falling ill, remained temporarily at Viareggio.

When the ships returned from Elba to Naples, Queen Caroline, who had forgiven herself for the past, hastened to meet her mother. She received her with the greatest honours, testifying for her a very lively affection, and accompanying her in the numerous and varied excursions that one is obliged to make when one goes to Naples, and which were got up for her amusement. She even gave a very brilliant *fête* for Madame Mère, not in the palace, but in the country near Portici. In a short time other members of the Imperial Family came to the Court of Naples. Pauline, recovered from her indisposition, arrived first. She was followed by King Jerome, then by Cardinal Fesch. Like a good sister, Caroline had sent escorts for these illustrious travellers, as the roads in her kingdom were not very safe; her deep political speculations not having permitted her to occupy herself with such vulgar considerations as the repression of brigandage.

During this time, mistrusting the intentions of the Emperor whilst thoroughly desirous of deserving the confidence that Napoleon seemed inclined to repose in him, and likewise urged by his advisers and the Queen[1] (though later she denied the impeachment), Murat hoped to conquer all Italy, and to preserve it thenceforth under his sceptre by grace of the victories that he expected the Emperor would gain in the North. To make this effort, to pay his troops, money was necessary, and Murat had none. The Queen, therefore, sold her diamonds. This, then, explains why, though allied to Austria, Murat took up arms under treacherous pretexts. This was more than imprudent, it was stupid; for Napoleon was doing his best to preserve peace with the Emperor of Austria, his father-in-law, and was at this very moment asking Caroline to write herself to Metternich to advise his sovereign to remain neutral during the general conflict which was about to begin.

But Murat, who had scarcely any disciplined troops in the ranks of his army, attacked the seasoned soldiers of Austria on the 3rd May near Tolentino. A panic seized his army and scattered it. Abandoned by almost all his men, he was forced to return to Naples. He entered the city on the 18th May, at nine in the evening, disguised as a lancer and accompanied merely by a few troopers. On reaching the palace he presented himself to the Queen, covered with dust, exhausted, emaciated, and said, as he embraced her:—

[1] Général Belliard, *Mémoires*.

"All is lost, save life. I have not been sufficiently lucky to find death."

And again embracing this woman who had been his evil genius in everything, he bade her a last farewell, kissed his children, and, scarcely allowing himself time to change into other clothes, fled.

His wife never saw him again.

XII

ON leaving Naples, Murat, after many dangers, arrived at Ischia, whence he succeeded in reaching the Provençal coast, landing in France on the 25th of May.

Napoleon refused to see him.

It is said that, in spite of the Emperor's prohibition, he came to within twenty leagues of Paris. The friendship existing between the Queen of Naples and Fouché, who no longer wished Napoleon on the throne, has caused it to be believed that this ambitious woman, feeling her own throne of the Two Sicilies collapsing under her, had conceived the project, more than daring, of robbing her brother and the Bourbons alike of the throne of France, of being, as is vulgarly said, the *troisième larron.* There must have been many talks on this subject between Fouché and Caroline, perhaps also letters, but the letters have probably been destroyed,[1] and the truth of these reports can doubtless never be proved.

By order of the Emperor, Murat was relegated to a country house, a villa close to Toulon, where he

[1] Unless they should be found in the archives of the city of Trieste, which contain a mass of Fouché's papers that, perhaps, will be published some day.

lived with his niece, the Duchesse de Dino, in a sort of captivity. He received, however, some officers of the Army Corps of Var, who wished to pay him a visit. To one of these he said, in explaining his conduct in 1814:—

"I have been misjudged by my compatriots; if they could have read my soul they would have rendered me greater justice. I could only keep my throne by acquiescing to the demands of the Allies. I hoped from it for happier days, when I should have shown myself according to my true character." [1]

The unfortunate man commenced to perceive that conduct which is the straightest and the most honest in everything, even in politics, is also the safest and the most skilful.

After the departure of Murat, Caroline had thought of making a resistance, but she did not long maintain this firm attitude; a few hours of reflection made her see that all resistance was henceforth impossible. She thereupon hastened to open negotiations with Lord Exmouth, who commanded the English squadron that was cruising round Naples, and offered to surrender to him two ships of seventy-four guns, on condition that she and her children should be transported to some port on the Provençal coast. The English admiral would have been very simple had he accepted such a proposition; for the two ships that Caroline offered him were in the harbour at Naples, and he had only to take them. This he told her, adding that he should regard it as a great honour to receive the Queen on his ship, but that he would

[1] Général Baron Pouget, *Souvenirs de guerre.*

conduct her to Trieste instead of to France and hand her over to the Austrian authorities.

Obliged to submit to the exigencies of the situation, the Queen of Naples went on board the *Tremendous*. Scarcely had she left her palace when there was a serious disturbance in the city which had been her capital. The convicts set fire to the prison, and the custom-house was pillaged and burnt. Other disorders were about to occur, when the National Guard intervened and restored tranquillity. Some English troops, too, were landed, and, under pretext of definitely assuring order, transported to their ships the cannons, rifles, ammunition, and all the material they could find. These spoils went to England to enrich the arsenals.

The ship in which Caroline was taken from Naples went first to Gaeta to pick up the four children of Murat, who had been sent there before the fatal battle of Tolentino; it then set sail for Trieste. Whilst she who had been Queen of Naples was delivered up to the Austrian authorities, a report was circulated in Paris that she had just arrived at St. Cloud. She was taken to the Castle of Raimbourg, in Austria. It was here that in the month of October she was informed of the sad end of her husband, Murat, who had been shot, after the mockery of a trial, in a court of the old castle of Pizzo.

After the loss of the battle of Waterloo and the second abdication of Napoleon, Murat, who could no longer remain in France, had tried to reconquer his kingdom of Naples, as Napoleon had reconquered France on leaving the Isle of Elba. In this mad

exploit he came to grief, was arrested, and judged by a military tribunal, before which he refused to appear, and which at one sitting sentenced him to death. A quarter of an hour later he was shot. During this quarter of an hour he wrote the following pathetic letter to his wife :—

"My dear Caroline, my last hour has come. In a few moments I shall have ceased to live; in a few moments you will be a widow. Never forget me; my life was never stained by any wrong to you. Farewell my Achille, farewell my Letizia, farewell my Lucien, farewell my Louise; prove yourselves worthy of me. I leave you without a kingdom and without fortune, in the power of my numerous enemies. Always be united, show yourselves superior to misfortune, remember who you are and what you have been, and may God bless you! Do not curse my memory. Know that my greatest grief in these last moments of my life is to die far from my children. Receive a father's blessing and my kisses and tears. Never forget your unhappy father."

This letter did not reach Caroline, whose only knowledge of it was through the newspapers, in which it was printed. Was she touched by it? Possibly. Perhaps in her dreams, in sleepless nights, the spectre of the unfortunate Murat came to reproach her for all the injury she had done him. Perhaps the prick of her own conscience reproached her for having been, by her unbridled ambition, the cause of his dishonour and death. But when it is a question of right feeling with Caroline, one can only say—Perhaps!

It pleases Providence sometimes to give us, in

decisive or critical moments of our life, very strange lessons, which throw light on the mysterious causes of our misfortunes. Murat proved this. When the hour of his doom struck, by the most devilish of coincidences, he discovered that the Neapolitan officer who presided at his execution bore the same name as his wife! This was General Annunziata. Was not this name Annunziata, which, at this supreme moment, Destiny so sardonically spat in his face, the explanation to him of the catastrophe which was terminating his life, the secret of its enigma? Had his wife Annunziata ever been other than his evil genius? Did not her name signify the domestic scenes that had poisoned his existence, the woman without a heart, the adulterous wife, ingratitude, disloyalty, trickery, treachery? Annunziata! Was not this woman, commonplace except in vice, ignorant in everything except in evil, unlucky . . . ah, well! was she not there at this moment of death before his eyes, alive, personified in the name of his executioner? Was it not as if Destiny seemed to say to him, "It is she who is the cause of your death"?

This chance bore so close a resemblance to a decree of Providence that it might have been mistaken for it.

Indeed, the unfortunate King of Naples knew only too well that he owed his misfortunes to his wife, and it is this which makes his letter to the perfidious Annunziata sublime, for it is a cry of affection and forgiveness!

Him, France can forgive; her, never!

XIII

DETHRONED, Caroline, whose thoughts constantly reverted to the period of life when she had been a queen, took the name of the Comtesse de Lipona (anagram of *Napoli*, the memory of which was so dear to her). Despoiled of her personal effects, which, however, England had guaranteed to her in the agreement signed with Admiral Pelew, incarcerated in the Castle of Raimbourg by the Austrians who had triumphed over her husband at Tolentino and had resolved upon her fall, it was some time before she was suffered to change her abode. On the other hand, she had not much to complain of, the proximity of Vienna being convenient both as regards her own amusements and her children's education. The Duchesse d'Abrantès asserts that after her misfortunes the Queen "had not been able to avoid that infirmity of women who, when they become old, are either saints or gamblers or gluttons. As I do not think she was a saint, she must have been one of the other two." [1]

She received much consideration from Prince Metternich, but, in spite of all his power, the illustrious diplomatist could not obtain for her the favour of

[1] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des Salons de Paris.*

being permitted to settle in Rome near her mother and some other members of her family. She was suffered, however, at last to take up her residence in Trieste, whither she went with her children. But the family hearth was not very peaceful, to judge from the following extracts of letters written by Madame Maret and published by General Th. Jung in his work *Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.*

"10 *April*, 1817. . . . The princess congratulates herself on her establishment in this city (Trieste). She has a beautiful house and a comfortable home. . . . "

"9 *November*, 1817. . . . She is surprisingly stiff and formal. Her daughters are reserved and say nothing. But the oldest son, who is called Prince Achille,[1] gives vent, even at the table and before his mother, who tolerates it, to a ridiculous rage against France.

"This young man, scarcely sixteen, is already as tall and developed as a man of twenty-five. He says, 'I am not French, and I will never be. I am an Italian, and I shall always be an Italian. My mother thought, if my father had died when he was with the army, that she would be queen. But as soon as the news had arrived I should have shut her up in the Castle of St. Elmo. She would have been all right there, and I should have proclaimed myself king.'

"The tone of this young man is altogether coarse.

[1] Achille Murat afterwards became a clerk in the New York Post Office; while his brother Lucien, with his wife Caroline Fraser, kept a girls' school!

He speaks without reflecting, and it is said that his health is ruined by debauchery. He gets drunk in the bosom of his family, but from all one can gather he has plenty of courage. The second son, who is taller than the eldest, is quite French in his views. He speaks little, and says that he would rather be the humblest citizen in France than King of Naples, which greatly irritates his brother."

The elements of discord being so pronounced, the home of the former Queen of Naples was not, therefore, the happiest. Caroline, however, not being a person to attach great importance to what did not touch her personally and directly, had her consolations. Moreover, her financial position, which was far from being as satisfactory as she could wish, gave her quite other things to think of. Her diamonds, which she had sold in 1815, had been sacrificed, the time not being favourable for speculations of this nature, and the money she had received had been expended entirely on the wants of the Neapolitan Army. Other jewels, pictures by the old masters, antique sculptures, curiosities that she had carried away from Naples on her departure, as previously when leaving the Elysée for Naples, all these things could only be disposed of at a great sacrifice, and she could not bring herself to give such treasures for a morsel of bread.

She therefore asked General Macdonald, an officer who, in spite of his Scotch name, was of Corsican origin —a former aide-de-camp of Murat and Minister at Naples when she was Regent—to go to Paris to look after certain pecuniary interests she had there. This



[*From an engraving by Bartolozzi, after the portrait by Cosway*]

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General Macdonald had been devoted to her before the death of Murat, and she was herself so accustomed to him that she ended in justifying his devotion by marrying him. But Macdonald's journey to Paris was almost fruitless, and Caroline's husband was obliged to return to Trieste without the funds on which she had counted.

Madame Récamier, who was travelling in Italy at about this time (towards the end of 1824), took it into her head to pay a visit to the former sovereign of Naples, by whom she had been cordially received in January, 1814. The Comtesse de Lipona received her quite as cordially as formerly, and among the various excursions the two friends made together was one to the Princess Napoleone, the only daughter of the Comtesse de Campignano (Elisa Baciocchi), who was soon to marry the Comte Camerata, and who lived near Trieste in a villa in which her aunt Caroline had spent the summer. At this period the Comtesse de Lipona, greatly discontented and disgusted with life in general, had begun to grow fat, "and as she was not tall her figure had lost its elegance."[1] She still preserved the whiteness of her complexion, but its rose tint was gone. Her manners were always amiable when she would take the trouble; with Madame Récamier they were perfect. She could not, however, suppress altogether her primitive nature, and Madame Récamier, herself the most considerate of women, observed, and her niece, Madame Charles Lenormant, relates it after her, that "Caroline's affection for General Macdonald was

[1] *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier.*

tinged with an air of command." Was this from her royal habit of always considering him as a subordinate, or was it her ordinary way of treating her husbands? For she had formerly behaved to Murat in the same manner. Perhaps there was something of both in her attitude.

When Madame Récamier left Trieste, the Comtesse de Lipona graciously wrote her a letter, which she received on returning to Paris. In it she expressed again her friendship, as well as her thanks for the visit she had received. These expressions were probably sincere, for *ennui* was now the worst enemy of the Comtesse de Lipona. But they were at the same time intended to remind Madame Récamier that she had promised to take steps among her powerful friends, the Duc de Montmorency, M. de Chateaubriand, and others, to recover for her the money she claimed was due to her in France by the State, as well as certain other sums which, owing to the political upheaval, were withheld illegally, she said, by France.

But the Comtesse de Lipona never succeeded in establishing her claims. She based them on the fact that, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Bayonne, she had abandoned to France the private property she possessed there, among others the Palace of the Elysée and the Artois Mews, in exchange for property situated in the Papal States and a grant of 500,000 francs revenue on the national property of the kingdom of Naples. France being in possession of the property ceded to it, and Rome and Naples having retaken that which they should

have given her in exchange, Caroline claimed that the agreement had not been kept by these two parties, consequently that this agreement was null, and that she should resume possession of the property she had ceded to France.

But the Conseil d'Etat would by no means accept this manner of reasoning. The Government of Louis Philippe, however, which in its struggle against the Legitimists wished to flatter the Liberals, Republicans, and Bonapartists, and to conciliate the last at least, submitted to the Chamber of Deputies a Bill granting the Comtesse de Lipona an annual pension of 100,000 francs. After having mentioned the claims of Caroline on the national property of France and the reasons why these claims could not be admitted, the Bill explained its motives by saying:—

"The present situation of Madame la Comtesse de Lipona merits the attention of France. Without doubt, at the time of the Treaty of Bayonne, France did not *guarantee* her anything—the Farnese estates or the grant of 500,000 francs—any more than it guaranteed her the throne of Naples. This throne and these revenues, based on French triumphs, ran the risk of perishing with them. But this is not a reason why we should show ourselves insensible to these events and their consequences. The King's Government recognises the distress of Madame la Comtesse; it remembers that French arms placed her in the rank of the Crowned Heads, and that she is the sister of the Emperor Napoleon. These words justify to us the Bill that we have the honour to present to you."

There was no occasion to raise difficulties. And

thus France rewarded, by an annual pension of 100,000 francs, this woman who instigated Murat to treason and was one of the most powerful causes of the French disasters, of the loss of the conquests of the Revolution, of the two invasions of France, and of all the misfortunes which resulted from them.[1]

At the moment when the Conseil d'Etat was discussing the claims that she hoped would avail to effect the restitution of what she called "her property"—the Elysée, the Artois Mews, and the Château de Neuilly—the Comtesse de Lipona had obtained permission to come to France. She was then established in Florence, where she was authorised to live.

In Paris her behaviour in 1814 was forgotten and only one thing remembered—that she was the sister of the great Emperor whose bones were buried on the remote rock of St. Helena. The arrival of the Comtesse de Lipona at Paris was the commencement of that movement which two years later decided the Government of Louis Philippe, through M. Charles de Rémusat, Minister of the Interior and son of the chamberlain of the Emperor and the lady-in-waiting of the Empress, to present to the Chamber of Deputies the Bill to bring to France the mortal remains of Napoleon.

When the Comtesse de Lipona was in Paris all

[1] At St. Helena, some one remarking to Napoleon that Murat had greatly contributed to the misfortunes of 1814, the Emperor said, "He decided them; he is one of the chief causes why I am here." (*Mémorial.*) It has been explained how obediently Murat executed the wishes of his imperious wife.

who were still living of the Emperor's court came to pay her their respectful homage. The son of General Auguste Colbert, that young and heroic trooper of the First Empire, killed in Spain in 1809, and whose family owed a quite special gratitude to Murat and his wife, was not the last to testify his respect.

"I had the honour," he writes, "to be presented to her. The emotion that my name caused her, the pleasure mingled with sadness with which she sought to find in me my father's likeness, have not faded from my memory.

"'What! the son of Auguste Colbert that we loved so much!' she said, looking at me. What memories must then have crowded upon her!" [1]

What regrets also, and what remorse—perhaps!

She went, it goes without saying, more than once to see Madame Récamier. She went also to the *atelier* of Gérard, where under the Consulate she had posed for the master.

"I shall go to-morrow to Gérard's," she said one day to the painter, Jean Gigoux. "I am going to climb those little stairs up which all the celebrities of old times have squeezed themselves; yes, all who were distinguished and interesting, all the beauties of the day have climbed those little stairs, and it will afford me pleasure to find myself again in those small rooms that are so elegant and so full of sympathetic memories." [2]

[1] Marquis de Colbert-Chabanais: *Traditions et Souvenirs touchant le temps du général Auguste Colbert.*

[2] Jean Gigoux: *Causeries sur les artistes du mon temps.*

During her stay in Paris she must only have lived in memories. Each monument was one for her, often several. Must not thoughts of other days have crowded upon her memory at each step when she passed the Vendôme column, which in its gigantic spiral unfolds the deathless glory of Napoleon and mentions that of Murat, that incomparable cavalry leader, who had been her husband; when she passed under the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile, where his name is inscribed; before the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, where the bas-reliefs in bronze proclaim his immortality? What must have been her thoughts at the Elysée, where she once gave such splendid balls when she was still only the Grand Duchess of Berg; and, again, in 1810, when she came from Naples for the divorce and second marriage of her brother? What at the Tuileries, where she had reigned almost sovereign, more so than the Empress, and where she had opened the ball with the Military Governor of Paris whilst the Emperor, far away, was at work reaping his harvests of glory? Surely her reflections more than once must have been bitter, and often must she have said to herself: "If those times are no more the fault is mine, mine! It is due to my insensate ambition, my treachery, and my crimes! I have deserved my exile, my misfortunes, my shame; I have deserved them all. They are not too great a punishment for the streams of blood that I have caused to flow! Not too great for her who, after having proved false to her duty as wife and sister, has—supreme shame! —turned her army against her fatherland!"

The Comtesse de Lipona returned satisfied to Florence, where she found a new and last lover, M. Clavel, and informed him that France granted her a pension of 100,000 francs! But, as if Nature was revolted at seeing the country that she had so greatly helped to drain of blood and money bleed itself again of its gold for her and her lover, death smote her less than a year afterwards, in the prime of life.

Her end was not very peaceful, to judge from the *Mémoires* of M. Horace de Vielcastel. M. Clavel, wishing to be paid for his services, tried to make her sign in this supreme hour a will declaring him residuary legatee, when the children of Murat arrived, and, chasing away the wretch, permitted their mother to die in peace. She expired at Florence, May 18, 1839. Clavel received, however, a substantial compensation for the cruel loss he had just sustained. He sold to the heirs of the Queen of Naples, for the sum of 60,000 francs, the letters he had received from her.

As for Caroline, like Charles Bonaparte, her father, like Fesch, her uncle, like Napoleon and Lucien, her brothers, she died of a cancer of the stomach.

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